

Ten years at the top : an analysis of the role of Air Marshal Sir George Jones as Chief of the Air Staff, Royal Australian Air Force, 1942-1952

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TEN YEARS AT THE TOP
AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF
AIR MARSHAL SIR GEORGE JONES AS CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF, ROYAL
AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE 1942 - 1952

PETER HELSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY AT
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2006

Abstract

This thesis sets out to examine the proposition that Air Marshal Sir George Jones' time as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) of the Royal Australian Air force (RAAF) was both beneficial and detrimental to the Service but the benefits gained from his time in office outweighed the detriment.

Sir George Jones served as CAS for nearly ten years (1942 - 1952). This was the longest continuous appointment of a CAS to date. Jones was CAS for most of the Second World War and it was during that time that the two events for which he is most remembered occurred, viz the controversy surrounding his appointment and his ongoing conflict with the RAAF Operational Commander (W.D. Bostock).

In order to assess his impact on the RAAF, this thesis describes events and incidents that occurred while Jones was CAS. To compile this work, data was drawn from numerous sources including: interviews with family members and ex-RAAF personnel; official records maintained by the National Archives of Australia (NAA), the RAAF Historical Section and the RAAF Museum; Jones' personal papers held by family members and the Australian War Memorial; and the papers of other RAAF officers and politicians held by the RAAF Museum and the National Library of Australia (NLA). Jones wrote a brief autobiography, which (together with other secondary sources) was used to "fill in the gaps."

This research shows that Jones' time as CAS was far more eventful and filled with more conflict than he alludes to in his autobiography. He had no say in his appointment as CAS but his personality did not allow him to make the best of the situation with Bostock. Contrary to the views expressed in earlier works, Jones' appointment was not a mistake but a deliberate move by the Minister for Air.

The conclusion reached is that Jones' time in office was beneficial to the RAAF. He presided over its growth to being the world's fourth largest air force at the end of the Second World War. He oversaw its post war demobilisation and was responsible for planning the Service's structure to meet the Australian Government's needs during the early years of the Cold War.

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I am extremely grateful to the ex-RAAF members who wrote to me or gave me their time for interviews, especially Sir Richard Kingsland AO, CBE, DFC, Air Marshal J.W. Newham AC (rtd) and Wing Commander Dick Cresswell DFC (rtd). Thanks also to those people who knew Sir George and were prepared to give me details of their contacts with him.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UNSW or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at UNSW or elsewhere, is fully acknowledged.

I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Peter Helson
2006

Dedication

To Mary Gerardine Gallo

1 October 1959 — 24 December 2002.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAA	Anti Aircraft Artillery
AAF	Allied Air Forces
AAU	Air Ambulance Unit
ABDACOM	American, British, Dutch, Australian Command
ACH	Area Combined Headquarters
ACM	Air Chief Marshal
ACS	Airfield Construction Squadron
AD	Aircraft Depot
ADHQ	Air Defence Headquarters
ADSC	Australian Defence Studies Centre
AFCO	Air Force Confidential Order
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AIF	Australian Imperial Forces
AIRCDRE	Air Commodore
AMF	Australian Military Forces
AMOE	Air Member for Organisation and Equipment
AMP	Air Member for Personnel
AOB	Advance Operational Base
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
AOR	Air Operations Room
AP	Aircraft Park
APSC	Air Power Studies Centre
ARD	Aircraft Repair Depot
ARP	Air Raid Precautions
ASRF	Air Sea Rescue Flight
ASV	Air to Surface Vessel radar
ASW	Anti Submarine Warfare
AVG	American Volunteer Group
AVM	Air Vice-Marshal
AWM	Australian War Memorial
CAC	Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation
CAS	Chief of Air Staff
CB	Companion of the Order of the Bath
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CNS	Chief of Naval Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
COIC	Combined Operational Intelligence Centre
COL	Colonel
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CWR	Central War Room
DAP	Department of Aircraft Production
DC	Defence Committee
DCAS	Deputy Chief of the Air Staff
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross

EATS	Empire Air Training Scheme
FBMU	Flying Boat Maintenance Unit
FBRD	Flying Boat Repair Depot
FCU	Fighter Control Unit
FEAF	Far Eastern Air Force
FLGOFF	Flying Officer
FLTLT	Flight Lieutenant
ft	foot/feet (distance)
GEN	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GP	General Purpose
GPCAPT	Group Captain
GR/B	General Reconnaissance/Bomber
HQ	Headquarters
JPC	Joint Planning Committee
km	kilometres
£	pounds (money)
lbs	pounds (weight)
LCDR	Lieutenant Commander
LRMP	Long Range Maritime Patrol
LT	Lieutenant
LTCOL	Lieutenant Colonel
MAJGEN	Major General
mph	miles per hour
MVO	Member of the Royal Victorian Order
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NE Area	North Eastern Area
NEI	Netherlands East Indies
NLA	National Library of Australia
NT	Northern Territory
NWA	North-Western Area
OBU	Operational Base Unit
ORA	Other Regional Activities
OTU	Operational Training Unit
PM	Prime Minister
POL	Petrol, Oil and Lubricants
POW	Prisoner of War
PRU	Photographic Reconnaissance Unit
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAAF HQ	Royal Australian Air Force Headquarters
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RHS	RAAF Historical Section

RN	Royal Navy
rpg	rounds per gun
SAR	Search and Rescue
SQN	Squadron
SQNLDR	Squadron Leader
SWPA	South West Pacific Area
TAF	Tactical Air Force
USAAC	United States Army Air Corps
USAAF	United States Army Air Forces
USAF	United States Air Force
USN	United States Navy
VADM	Vice Admiral
WGCDR	Wing Commander

IMPERIAL/METRIC CONVERSION TABLE

1 inch (in)	25.4 millimetres (mm)
1 foot (ft)	30.5 centimetres (cm)
1 yard (yd)	0.914 metres (m)
1 nautical mile (nm)	1852 metres
1 pound (lb)	.454 kilograms (kg)
1 ton	1.02 tonne (t)
1 mile per hour (mph)	1.61 kilometres/hour (km/h)
1 knot (kt)	1 nautical mile per hour (nm/h)
1 pound (£)	2 dollars (\$)
1 shilling (1/-)	10 cents (10c)

INTRODUCTION

He was a very complex man, full of contradictions. He was on the board of Ansett Transport Industries and yet he stood for Federal Parliament for the Australian Labor Party.¹

This thesis sets out to examine Air Marshal Sir George Jones' role as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), with the perhaps controversial hypothesis that Jones' time in office was more beneficial than detrimental to the Service.

Jones served as CAS for nearly ten years—between May 1942 and January 1952. This was the longest continuous period for any person holding the CAS position² and yet so little appears to be known about Jones and his time in office. Jones did not have a thrasonical personality. Instead he was quiet and introspective by nature but he made an attempt at telling his own story in a very brief autobiography titled From Private to Air Marshal.³ This book is disappointing in its content in that it leaves out more than it tells. One might have expected that a person who served in the RAAF for over 30 years and lived beyond the age of 90 to be more forthcoming.

George Jones was a very complex man who led a long and interesting life. In order to put Jones' time as CAS into perspective this thesis looks briefly at his early life and his service during the Great War. Experiences and events during this time helped develop his personality. Jones did not come from a distinguished family or social background. He was born into a working class family in rural Victoria in 1895. His initial formal education was at the local state school and when he completed his time there he moved to

¹ Mrs Rosemary Ruddell discussing her grandfather, Air Marshal Sir George Jones KBE, CB, DFC. Interview 16 June 2000.

² Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams served as CAS for the longest time but his term in the position was broken into three periods—October 1922 to December 1922; February 1925 to December 1932 and June 1934 to February 1939. Jones' time in the position was unbroken.

³ G. Jones From Private to Air Marshal. Greenhouse Publications, Richmond, Victoria, 1988.

Melbourne to work as a motor mechanic. Like so many young men at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force because he expected military service would provide excitement and an opportunity to travel to other parts of the world. After participating in the Gallipoli campaign, Jones decided that he was unsuited to land warfare. His interest in machinery led him to join the Australian Flying Corps (AFC), where he initially served as an air mechanic before successfully completing pilot training. By the end of the war Jones had reached the rank of Captain, had destroyed seven German aircraft in air-to-air combat and had been awarded the DFC. The war, however, had also left its mark on Jones because as a result of his combat experiences he suffered from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Jones had problems when relating to other people and it is likely that this partially resulted from the PTSD.

Jones returned to Australia after the war and resumed his employment in a motor vehicle workshop. In 1921 he joined the RAAF and remained in the Service until 1952. Jones had a steady career progression in the RAAF and in the 1920s and 1930s worked in a series of administrative and maintenance supervisory positions. In addition he attended the RAF Staff College in 1929. By the outbreak of the Second World War Jones had built up a distinguished enough career but he lacked experience in an operational environment. It could be argued, however, that Jones was not unique in this regard because at that time few RAAF officers had gained any sort of operational experience (other than their service in the Great War) as the RAAF was, in personnel terms, a very small Service and it had not been deployed to undertake any combat operations.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war Jones occupied the position of Director of Training. In this position he played a major role in the establishment and conduct of the

Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). Jones possessed good administrative skills, which allowed him to build up the huge training structure within Australia that was necessary to support EATS. EATS was one of the RAAF's great achievements during the war.

Elements outside the RAAF were to make a huge impact on Jones' career. The Australian Government had become disenchanted with the RAAF's high command during the late 1930s and in 1940 an RAF officer (Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett) was seconded from Britain to head the Service. The circumstance leading up to this appointment and the Government's attitude are considered in the second chapter of this thesis. The Government changed from a conservative to a Labor regime in late 1941. The new Government, led by John Curtin, was content to follow its predecessor when it came to command of the Air Force and was keen to gain the services of another RAF officer to head the RAAF when Burnett's appointment was over.

When the attempts to appoint an RAF officer failed, the Government was forced to select an RAAF officer as CAS. Many of the Service's senior officers had been selected for operational positions, while others (such as Air Marshal Richard Williams) were out of favour with the Government. In a surprise move Jones was appointed and promoted from Wing Commander (temporary Group Captain, acting Air Commodore) to acting Air Vice-Marshal. It has been claimed that his appointment as CAS was a mistake. This is incorrect and this thesis examines the possible reasons for, and the situation leading up to, Jones' appointment. It is quite likely that Jones' working class background was attractive to some Labor politicians. Nobody was more surprised with the appointment than Jones himself as he expected Air Vice-Marshal William Bostock would be made CAS. Bostock was instead appointed as the Chief of Staff to the Allied Air Force Commander.

After the outbreak of the Pacific war, the Government handed over control of Australia's armed forces to the Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), General Douglas MacArthur. All Australian based elements of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Australian Army were placed under MacArthur's command. Things were different for the RAAF. Shortly after the change of Government the Minister for Air (Arthur Drakeford) and the Secretary of the Department of Air (Melville Langslow) devised a plan to reorganise the RAAF into an operational arm (RAAF Command) and an administrative arm. One reason for the division was that it allowed the Government to place RAAF units under the control of the Allied Air Forces (AAF), so that they could participate in combat operations, while at the same time maintaining some Australian control over the Service. At the same time the Allied Air Commander, Lieutenant General George Kenney set about separating the AAF into two distinct bodies. Drakeford and Langslow did not consider the personalities of the two officers and their plan, while seemingly well intentioned was to lay the foundations for a feud that developed between Jones and Bostock. The feud overshadowed the RAAF's achievements in the SWPA and the lack of overall command for the RAAF allowed the US commanders (MacArthur and Kenney) to use the Service in any manner they pleased.

As CAS, Jones was given responsibility for the RAAF's administrative functions. He took this to mean that he was responsible for every aspect of raising, training and maintaining the RAAF. Thus he found himself in continual conflict with Bostock who believed that he should have been given the administrative functions necessary to command the Service's operational units. In retaining all administrative functions Jones allowed the Government to keep some control over the RAAF. However, Jones' actions

only fuelled the destructive animosity. The thesis looks at some of the issues over which Jones and Bostock came into conflict.

Jones' appointment as CAS was initially to be a temporary measure because the Government was still keen to gain the services of an experienced RAF officer who would be appointed to a position of overall command of the RAAF. This became a more important issue as the relationship between Jones and Bostock worsened. The thesis examines the failed attempts to appoint an RAF officer and the influence that MacArthur had over Curtin in this matter. The Government's failure to resolve the situation does not reflect well on Curtin's reputation as Australia's wartime Prime Minister, in that he allowed a conflict between the two senior officers of one of Australia's Defence Services to continue at the time of the country's greatest national security crisis. The Government could have solved the command problem by promoting either Jones or Bostock but this was opposed on every occasion that it was discussed by the politicians. It was not until 1947, when the war was over and the RAAF was a fraction of its wartime size that Jones was promoted to Air Marshal.

Jones' achievements as the wartime CAS are often overshadowed by his relationship with Bostock. It says a great deal about the strength of his character that he was able to achieve so much in the face of continual aggression from Bostock, in an environment dominated by MacArthur, and with only very little support from an inexperienced Government. One of Jones' biggest tasks during the war was to obtain adequate numbers of aircraft for his Service. It was here that he ran into serious problems because of worldwide demands for combat aircraft and by the initial inability of US and British industry to be able to meet those demands. As we will see in this thesis, Jones also faced

political problems when it came to securing aircraft for the RAAF. The Australian Government was excluded from the aircraft allocation process. Despite its geographic location within the SWPA, MacArthur claimed that Australia was part of the British Empire and that the British should provide aircraft for the RAAF. The British government's view was that the SWPA was an American theatre and therefore the US should supply the RAAF. Jones finally took matters into his own hands travelled to the United States and Britain in December 1944 to negotiate a satisfactory aircraft supply agreement. As a result of Jones' work the RAAF acquired its own heavy bomber capability and gained a significant number of fighter aircraft.

At the end of the war Jones oversaw the demobilisation of the RAAF. This was a task almost as difficult as building the Service during the wartime years. Jones distanced himself from the day-to-day demobilisation activities and devoted his time to planning the post war Service. He was, however, closely involved with one of the most controversial aspects of the demobilisation process. That was the retirement of a number of the Service's senior officers, including Williams, Bostock and Goble. This issue is examined in some detail in this thesis and while it is acknowledged that some of the reasons Jones provided to justify some of the retirement might be seen as unprofessional, we may also ask the question what employment could be provided for a number of very senior officers in the post war RAAF?

Jones' greatest post war achievement was developing the future plan for the RAAF. Plan D, as it was known, formed the basis for the structure of the RAAF for the subsequent 20 years. It was the result of a good deal of intellectual work on Jones' part. To equip the reformed Service, Jones started the processes for the acquisition of new and

advanced (for the time) aircraft—the CAC Sabre, GAF Canberra, Lockheed P2V Neptune and the CAC Winjeel. These aircraft proved to be very good selections and some would remain in service until the 1970s. Jones was also keen to develop an education regime for RAAF personnel and during the post war years he was responsible for the establishment, at Point Cook, of the RAAF College (an initiative led by J.E. Hewitt). This was to be the RAAF's equivalent of the RAN College at Jervis Bay or the Royal Military College at Duntroon and was to provide officer cadets with a university education. He also set up the RAAF Staff College, which was also located at Point Cook. This was a significant move for the RAAF because it meant that officers no longer had to attend the RAF staff college in Britain in order to further their Service education. The Staff College provided an intellectual centre for the RAAF to educate its future leaders in the unique features and potential of air power. The third education initiative that occurred under Jones' oversight was the RAAF apprentice scheme, which provided technical education for non commissioned personnel.

During the post war period RAAF units and personnel were engaged as part of coalition forces in conflicts and other incidents, such as the Berlin Airlift and the Korean War. Jones again had no operational control over these units. Instead they were part of larger formations, which were under the command of US or British officers. Jones' role was to raise the units and send them to the theatre of operations, as well as to provide advice to Government on the operations in which the units were engaged. Australian participation in the post war conflicts has been covered in numerous secondary sources⁴ and because of this and Jones' limited role, it has not been covered in detail in this thesis.

⁴ For example: Alan Stephens Going Solo. AGPS, Canberra, 1996. S. Eather Odd Jobs. RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria, 1996. P. Edwards Crises and Commitments. Allen & Unwin, North Sydney,

In December 1949 the Australian Government changed as the Liberal party, headed by R.G. Menzies was voted into office. Like previous Governments, Menzies and his colleagues were dissatisfied with the RAAF's high command (and Jones in particular) and once again the British Government was approached for the secondment of a suitable RAF officer to be appointed RAAF CAS. The argument put forward for appointing an RAF officer was that there was no suitable officer within the RAAF who could, at the time, adequately fill the position. Although the British were initially opposed to the idea, they eventually offered Air Marshal Sir Donald Hardman, an officer who quite capably filled the position. The Government could not find another position, either within the RAAF or in the Federal bureaucracy, into which they could place Jones. The only alternative was to place him in retirement after he had handed over the CAS position to Hardman. Thus ended an eventful career, in which Jones rose through the RAAF (and its predecessor) from Air Mechanic second class to Air Marshal.

If we are to look at the benefits gained by the RAAF during Jones' time as CAS, we will see that he was responsible for the oversight of all its administrative, supply and training function at a time when the Service was at its greatest in terms of numbers of aircraft and personnel. He made numerous trips to operational areas in order to gain an appreciation of the needs of the personnel. He managed to secure an adequate aircraft supply for the RAAF despite opposition from other air forces. During the post war years the major events he presided over were the demobilisation, the planning of the RAAF and its re-equipping. One would be inclined to think that Jones' time as CAS was beneficial to the RAAF.

NSW, 1992. J. Mordike The Post War Years 1945 – 1954. APSC, Canberra, 1997. D. Wilson Lion Over Korea. Banner Books, Belconnen, 1994. R. O'Neill Australia in the Korean War 1950 – 53. Volume 1: Strategy and Diplomacy. AWM/AGPS, Canberra 1981.

I

A VERY COMPLEX MAN

The future RAAF Chief of the Air Staff, George Jones, was born on 18 October 1896 in a house located on the Tait Hamilton Road, Gobarup, near Rushworth in rural Victoria.¹ He was the youngest of ten children (eight of whom survived beyond the age of five). His father, Henry Jones, was a miner who died as the result of an accident three months before George was born. The family was extremely poor financially and their situation became even worse after Henry Jones' death. As a result there was no chance of anything other than the basic education for the Jones children. George Jones attended Rushworth State School, finishing his education there in 1910 at the age of 14 and graduating with a Certificate of Merit—the highest qualification awarded at the small country school. The Jones family religion was Methodist and, as a child and teenager, George was raised to adhere to its strict beliefs. As a consequence he rarely drank alcohol. This had some impact on his social life and after he joined the RAAF he rarely mixed with his fellow officers outside work hours and was not a regular patron of the officer's mess. For this reason and other aspects of his personality his contemporaries saw him as a remote individual or a “loner.”²

After leaving school, Jones took up an apprenticeship as a carpenter.³ As an apprentice Jones learned building skills and how to operate machinery including steam engines and circular saws. He soon found his real interest lay in machinery

¹ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones of East Bentleigh and Mrs Rosemary Ruddell of Glen Waverly, Victoria. 16 June 2000. George Jones had two birthdays. He was born on 18 October but his family did not register his birth with the Government Registrar until 22 November, which is the date shown on his birth certificate. Register Schedule A: *BIRTHS in the District of Rushworth in the Colony of Victoria*. 1896.

² Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 24 October 2000.

³ H.W. Forster Waranga 1865 – 1965. F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, Vic, 1965. p. 122.

rather than carpentry so he accepted an offer, from his brother Sam, to work for a motor vehicle repair business that Sam jointly owned in Melbourne. In 1912 George Jones moved to Melbourne with his worldly wealth—four gold sovereigns and his bicycle.⁴

Jones soon became a competent motor mechanic but had several disagreements with his brother's business partner, Frank Levy. Levy was a domineering man who was constantly criticising Jones' work.⁵ After some open disagreements between the two men, Jones quit his job and took up employment with another motor workshop, where he assembled motor cycles.⁶ He later returned to work as a mechanic on higher wages, this time employed by Bevan Brothers, in Malvern. In his spare time, to help him advance in his chosen trade, he started to study fitting and turning at the Melbourne Working Men's College. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Great War interrupted this course of study.⁷

The Great War

By 1914 George Jones was no stranger to military service. As a young Australian male living in a pre-Great War urban environment he became subject to the contemporary compulsory military service regime and was required to undertake part time basic training. Before 1914, his service comprised two years as a senior cadet at North Fitzroy and then, at the age of 17½, he served for a year as a member of a

⁴ G. Jones From Private to Air Marshal Greenhouse Publications, Richmond, Victoria, 1988. p. 6. This document will be referred to as 'G. Jones autobiography'. Family members remember Sam Jones to have been a tall man, who was married but had no children and died at a young age. Interview with Mr Bob Jones of Airport West, Victoria. 11 July 2001.

⁵ AWM MSS1027. *From Private to Air Marshal*. This document is an early draft of Jones' autobiography. It contains some information that was not included in the published version.

⁶ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones and Mrs Rosemary Ruddell. 16 June 2000.

⁷ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Australian Air Force. Application for a Commission as Flying Officer (Pilot).

militia unit—the 29th (Port Phillip) Light Horse.⁸ In units such as these, Jones and hundreds of other young men around Australia, attended parades on Saturday afternoons where they practised military drill and received instruction in firearms handling.

Jones enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in May 1915⁹ and on 5 June he was found to be medically fit for active service.¹⁰ The rest of Jones' induction was finalised on 21 June when he took the oath, swearing he would well and truly serve the Sovereign Lord King in the Australian Imperial Force.¹¹

On hearing of the start of the Gallipoli campaign Jones, seeking action and excitement and believing that this would be provided overseas, quickly volunteered to serve there. By August 1915 he was back in Melbourne, as a member of the 9th Light Horse.¹² In that month he embarked aboard the transport ship *Kyarra*, which took the unit to Suez.¹³

The 9th Light Horse's next move was to Gallipoli where the troops were taken ashore by barge. They then marched to the front line to a place called Rhododendron Ridge. Jones noted the accommodation arrangements, "here I was introduced to my home for the next three months. It was a hole in the ground."¹⁴ It was in this hole that Jones spent his 19th birthday. Jones was at Gallipoli for the final four months of the campaign. During this time there was no heavy fighting. Instead the conflict was

⁸ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force. Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. G Jones autobiography. pp. 6-7. RHS George Jones file, *Air Marshal Sir George Jones KBE, CB, DFC*.

⁹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*. Two of his older brothers enlisted in the 1st AIF, although Jones makes no mention of them in his autobiography, nor in any other document made available to me.

¹⁰ G. Jones autobiography. p. 7.

¹¹ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force. Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

¹² Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

¹³ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

¹⁴ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

maintained by snipers on both sides shooting at their enemy while Australian troop movements were confined to scouting and patrols.¹⁵

Jones participated in nocturnal scouting and raiding patrols from Rhododendron Ridge with his Light Horse colleagues and they frequently encountered Turkish soldiers in combat.¹⁶ In addition to the combat patrols, Jones had the occasional opportunity to leave his accommodation and go the rear areas because he was trusted with the task of carrying the rum ration that was issued to the troops in the trenches.¹⁷

One of Jones' colleagues became the victim of enemy gun fire when he looked out from the hole and had the top of his head shot off by a Turkish machine gunner.¹⁸ The death of his friend had a marked effect on Jones. This was the first recorded instance of combat trauma he witnessed,¹⁹ and given his comments about moving the soldier's body, it would appear he suffered from some form of operational stress as a result of the incident, a condition that remained with him for the rest of his life:

Another young fellow (whose name I forget) and I had to carry him towards the beach, up and down hills in the snow and the mud. When he rolled off the stretcher, we laughed hysterically and rolled him back on again. It indicates the state of our mind at the time.²⁰

We should now consider why Jones was affected by his experiences at Gallipoli.

Operational Stress

Operational stress is a term which encompasses an array of effects caused by the stresses of military operations and refers to the temporary or lasting psychological upset causing a marked reduction in an individual's ability to function effectively.

¹⁵ C.E.W. Bean The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918. Volume II. The Story of ANZAC from 4 May 1915 to The Evacuation. Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney, NSW, 1924. p. 811.

¹⁶ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918.*

¹⁷ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England.*

¹⁸ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England. War Experience from 1915 to 1918.* G. Jones autobiography. p.10.

¹⁹ It is not recorded whether Jones witnessed members of his raiding patrols being killed or injured. Nor is it mentioned whether he or any of his comrades killed enemy soldiers during these nocturnal activities.

Forms of operational stress include battle fatigue, battle shock, and critical incident stress. In the past, other terms were used to describe operational stress, including shell shock, war neurosis, neuropsychiatric and combat exhaustion. In more recent times, forms of operational stress have been identified as Transient Stress Response, Acute Stress Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Operational stress may be a normal reaction to a very abnormal situation. It does not constitute a psychiatric illness, although it may become one, in the form of depression, anxiety or psychosis. The source of the stress, the operational environment, includes elements such as actual combat, humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, exposure to displaced persons camps, massacre sites or major accidents. Stress in these environments can arise from acute sources, including combat or dealing with bodies, or from chronic sources such as stress that arises after a prolonged separation from family or living in isolated areas with the same people for long periods.²¹

In addition to the above, other elements add to the likelihood of a person suffering from operational stress. The environment in which the operation is being conducted is always a source of stress. Mental and physical exhaustion may be caused by darkness; cold; wet weather; wind; noise; heat or excessive exposure to the sun. Troops may suffer anxiety before combat from contemplating the forthcoming action and imagining the worst case scenarios (such as the strength of the enemy or the possibility of being killed or injured). In addition, sustained or unexpected bombardment or attack; or observing comrades being killed or injured can have a devastating effect on the mind.²²

²⁰ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

²¹ Dept of Defence, ADFP 714 *Operational Stress Management*. pp 1-1 & 1-2.

²² Dept of Defence, ADFP 714. pp 2-4 & 2-5.

Jones encountered many of these unfavourable elements. He was away from home, living in a confined space with other soldiers, one of whom he saw being killed. Unfortunately, the discomforts of Gallipoli and witnessing death at close quarters were only the start. As we shall see in later chapters, Jones encountered other incidents of trauma and, as a result, was to suffer from this stress for most of his life. The stress caused, inter alia, headaches and nightmares. At first he thought the headaches he suffered at the end of the Great War were the result of too much alcohol consumed during victory celebrations but later in life he determined there was a more realistic solution, “I’m quite certain they were due to long recurring periods of exposure to terror. This is a serious conclusion reached after reading some of the findings of modern psychology. There is a firm scientific basis for this belief.”²³

Disease was rampant among the Australian troops at Gallipoli, due to the cramped living conditions, unhealthy rations and poor sanitation. In late November 1915 Jones himself was taken sick, suffering from yellow jaundice and dysentery at the same time, “a most unpleasant combination,”²⁴ and on 1 December 1915, he was moved to a casualty clearing station on the beach while he tried to recover.²⁵ Jaundice takes the form of a yellowness of skin and eyes caused by an excess of bile pigment. While not a disease itself, jaundice is a symptom of a number of different diseases and disorders of the liver, gall bladder and blood.²⁶ The jaundice stayed with him for a long time and as a result of the effects of it on his skin he acquired the nickname ‘Yellow Jones’ in his early days with the RAAF.²⁷

²³ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

²⁴ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England*.

²⁵ NAA *World War I Personnel Records*—George Jones. Casualty Form – Active Service.

²⁶ B.F. Miller & C.B. Keane *Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine and Nursing*. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia PA, 1973. p. 505.

²⁷ In the discussion following a paper titled *RAAF Operational Commanders*, presented by Dr Alan Stephens at the 1993 RAAF History Conference, Wing Commander R.M. Hanstein commented “as a young officer we had a nickname for him of Yellow Jones.” Alan. Stephens (ed) *The RAAF in the SWPA 1942-1945*. APSC, Canberra, 1993. p. 49. Mr Tom Russell advised me that he

Jones and his colleagues were evacuated from Gallipoli in December 1915. He later claimed that he was never in his life more pleased to leave a place.²⁸ The 9th Light Horse returned to Egypt and after training was sent to the Suez Canal. The next major change in Jones' life came the following year when he joined the Australian Flying Corps.

Jones Joins the AFC

A chance meeting with 'Nugget' Balfour,²⁹ an old friend from Melbourne, gave Jones an opportunity to make a significant change in his life. Jones had by this time transferred to the Imperial Camel Corps and Balfour was working as a mechanic with 1 SQN, Australian Flying Corps (AFC).³⁰ During the unexpected reunion at Abbassia in Egypt, Balfour asked Jones "Why don't you get into the Australian Flying Corps, like me?"³¹

The conversation with Balfour was to be a turning point in George Jones' life. His interest in aviation was sufficiently aroused so that when invitations to apply to join the AFC were published in the Routine Orders he immediately applied. His application was approved but Jones' decision raised questions amongst his Camel

suspected the nickname 'Yellow Jones' came from a medical condition, not from any lack of courage. Interview with Mr Tom Russell of Miranda, NSW. 9 December 1999. Sir Richard Kingsland also mentioned the nickname and advised that Jones had a sallow complexion. Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland of Campbell, ACT. 12 December 1999.

²⁸ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*. Late in his life Jones was asked to accompany a party of veterans on a tour of the Gallipoli peninsula. He refused, angrily claiming that he never wanted to see the place again. Interview with Mrs Anne Jones, 16 June 2000. Interview with Mr Bruce Ruxton of Beaumauris, Victoria. 24 April 2001.

²⁹ 1st Class Air Mechanic (1/AM) Albert "Nugget" Balfour enlisted on 17 August 1915 and joined 1 SQN AFC with the original contingent in January 1916. He was wounded in the leg by sniper fire at a Bedouin village near Mejdal, Palestine in December 1917 but survived the War and returned to Australia in March 1919. M. Lax *One Airman's War*. Banner Books, Maryborough, Qld, 1997. p. 89 & 163.

³⁰ 1 SQN AFC left Melbourne in March 1916 for Service in the Middle East. On their arrival in Egypt in April, the Squadron was placed under the command of the British who re-numbered it 67 SQN. The Australians, who continued to refer to themselves as 1 SQN in all but official paperwork, resented this move. As a partial compromise the unit was referred to as No 67 (Australian) Squadron for most of 1917 and early 1918. Finally the unit was officially renumbered 1 SQN AFC on 6 February 1918. M. Lax *One Airman's War*. p.10.

³¹ M. Ryan *The bush kid who reached for the sky* in *Sunday Press*. 20 January 1985. p. 21.

Corps colleagues, who queried the transfer accompanied by the loss of a Corporal's rank and pay to return to a rank level with a Private. Jones, however, did not find anything special about being a Corporal.³² We can look at Jones' decision more logically than a just a desire to change Corps. It seems reasonable that, as a motor mechanic with a considerable interest in machinery and internal combustion engines, he would be attracted to the AFC as it was an organisation that depended on technology and mechanisation to carry out its business. He had spent several years working with engines and, as such, was the type of person that the embryonic air forces were recruiting into their ranks. Working with aircraft and aircraft engines would expand his knowledge and expertise and would benefit him when it came to post war employment. There is also another issue to consider. As a Light Horse trooper, Jones had seen land warfare close up at Gallipoli and it had no appeal to him. There was none of the glamour that he and his fellow troopers were looking forward to before they left Melbourne. Instead he had witnessed the unproductive trench warfare stalemate at Gallipoli; the discomfort of living in a trench; climatic extremes; having his body continually bitten by lice; and the trauma of close-up death, which would trouble him for the rest of his life. He may well have had the idea that service with the AFC, on airfields away from the front lines, would remove him from the horror and grief of land warfare but would still allow him to contribute to the war effort, using his natural and acquired skills and abilities to their best value. In all, Jones made a sensible decision.

Jones transferred from the Camel Corps to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) – Australian Wing, on 28 October 1916³³ and he was posted to 67 (Australian) SQN

³² Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

³³ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force – Attestation Papers of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. p. 4. Statement of Service. On that same day Jones was struck off strength with the ICC and reverted to his permanent rank of Trooper.

RFC, as a 2nd Class Air Mechanic (2/AM).³⁴ It was during his short time with this unit that Jones first met Richard Williams. The latter was an officer with a somewhat puritanical disposition—he “took his profession very seriously, he was a non-drinker, non-smoker and non-swearer.”³⁵ Jones’ use of profane language while working on an aircraft did not mark an auspicious beginning to their acquaintance:

I was helping to install an engine in a BE 2e, and working at night by electric light. For some time sandflies had been getting in my eyes, and I finally called them ‘bloody bastards’. I had no idea there was an audience. Williams, standing close by, reprimanded me so severely it seemed I would be expelled from the Flying Corps. He was at that time much more narrow in his views than he later became, but I heard on good authority he was thinking hard whether it would not be a good thing to get rid of me.³⁶

Shortly after Jones was transferred to another unit—68 SQN (later to become 2 SQN, AFC). He suspected the sand flies incident, “led to my transfer to No2; he probably didn’t want my kind in his squadron.”³⁷ At this time 2 SQN flew Horace Farman biplanes and as a 2/AM, Jones was placed in charge of the Gnome engine of one of these aircraft.³⁸ His mechanical skills were quickly recognised and instead of looking after just one engine, Jones was put in charge of a workshop truck and given the job of manufacturing small parts for the Squadron’s Farman’s Gnome engines.³⁹ On 1 April 1917 he was promoted to 1/AM.⁴⁰

³⁴ NAA *World War I Personnel Records—George Jones*. Casualty Form – Active Service.

³⁵ R. Hunt *Australian Air Aces*. Horwitz Publications, Sydney, NSW. 1962. p. 65. D Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal in Over the Front*. p. 99.

³⁶ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*. One wonders, however, how Williams expected a young motor mechanic from ‘the bush’ to speak when he was being harassed by insects.

³⁷ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli’s trenches to CAS in Contact*. Vol 42, No1, 1987. p. 4.

³⁸ The Horace Farman was an aircraft design that was the result of a collaboration of the two Farman brothers Henry and Maurice. In 1915 the brothers (both established aircraft constructors) pooled their efforts and built an aircraft type that used the best aspects of their existing types. K. Isaacs *Military Aircraft of Australia 1909 – 1918*. AWM, Canberra, 1971. p. 25.

³⁹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 13. S. Brogden *Air Marshal Sir George Jones: The Early Years in Aircraft* October 1984. p. 40. NLA audio tape TRC 425/2 SIR GEORGE JONES. Interviewed by Fred Morton, c1975. Transcribed by Peter Helson, December 2001.

⁴⁰ NAA *World War I Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force – Attestation Papers of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. p. 4. Statement of Service. Date of promotion is shown as 1 April 1917.

The life of an air mechanic was not enough for Jones and when he saw other ground crew applying for pilot training, he also applied.⁴¹ Jones' application was successful⁴² and on 6 July 1917 he marched out of 2 SQN to the Staff Officer for Aviation in London to begin pilot training. By 1917 pilot training was an involved regime and in order to gain his wings Jones needed to have accumulated 20 hours solo flying, to have undertaken a landing without power from 8,000 feet and to have qualified in bombing and aerial photography tests, as well as the required technical subjects.⁴³ In addition, as pilots were commissioned officers Jones was to become accustomed with the "various other subjects essential for an air force officer."⁴⁴ "I learned to play tennis and to go punting on the river and generally to live like a gentleman."⁴⁵ "Learning to behave like a 'gentleman' was a totally new way of life for me."⁴⁶ We might expect the young man from rural Victoria enjoyed the new life style. Jones successfully completed the required training and on 22 November 1917 (his 'official' 21st birthday) he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps.⁴⁷ A few months later he was posted to 71 SQN (a fighter squadron equipped with Sopwith Camels) based in France.

⁴¹ M. Ryan *The bush kid who reached for the sky*. p. 21.

⁴² Jones' success with his application may relate to the high rate of attrition the Allies were experiencing with aircrew at the time. That is, because of the casualty rate, the RFC needed as many pilots as possible. During the Great War the RFC lost 9,378 aircrew, a figure which may seem insignificant when compared with the losses experienced in land combat. When we consider, however, the newness of the Service and the small numbers of personnel involved in combat, this number is as horrific as the losses on the Western Front. At a unit level, some squadron's casualty rates reached 98% for an extended period, while the average for all squadrons during the war was 50%. The life expectancy for a new pilot flying operations over the Western Front was three weeks. M. Hayes *Angry Skies*. ABC, Sydney, NSW, 2003. p. 84. Even as late as October 1918, Jones (then a Flight Commander) lost five pilots from his flight in one week.

⁴³ D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal*. p. 99.

⁴⁴ G. Jones autobiography. p. 14.

⁴⁵ Jones papers. Audio tape of *The Today Show*. Mike Hamilton reporter. Transcribed by Peter Helson, 11 December 2000.

⁴⁶ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli's trenches to CAS*. p. 4.

⁴⁷ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England*.

71 Squadron Australian Flying Corps

Lieutenant George Jones joined 71 SQN AFC, in France, during January 1918, about six weeks after the unit's initial deployment.⁴⁸ He remained with this unit until March 1919. During this time he shot down seven German aircraft (including five of the highly acclaimed Fokker DVIIIs); was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross; was promoted to Captain; and was made commander of B Flight. However, in addition to this distinguished record he also saw his colleagues killed in aerial combat and Jones himself was shot down once and was also badly wounded in combat with a German fighter.

On one occasion Jones was attacked by a German fighter. He was unable to fight back because his aircraft's machine guns jammed and to make matters worse the aircraft ran out of fuel. Jones was pursued by the German as far as no man's land, where he crashed the Camel. This incident was another stressful combat episode that was to have a permanent effect on Jones. The horrible situation in which he was out of fuel and was being chased, without the ability to retaliate left its mark on him. His nerves were badly shaken and for several months afterwards, when he thought of the incident, his hands would continuously tremble. If he thought about it while eating a meal, he could not hold his knife and fork. As soon as the Camel was repaired he immediately took it for a test flight. Unfortunately he was still troubled by the crash and instead of landing at 65 mph he approached at 120 mph and narrowly avoided a serious accident. His nerves eventually improved sufficiently and he was able to continue flying combat operations.

⁴⁸ Jones papers. Hand-written notes – WW 1 experiences. Typed note *With No 4 Squadron Australian Flying Corps in France, Belgium and Germany*.

Late on 24 March 1918 Lieutenant George Jones was wounded in action. His account of this painful incident forms the introduction to his autobiography.⁴⁹ Jones described the incident:

On the 24th March I was sent out in a formation acting as escort to two D.H. 4 machines, engaged in photographic work. After they had finished their job, and had turned towards home, a single Albatross scout dived towards them, but was driven off by another pilot and myself, before it got within range. A few minutes later I turned aside to drop my bombs on a target which I had selected,⁵⁰ and had just started to regain my position in the formation, when I heard someone shooting at me. As there were no E.A. on my level, nor above me, it was evident that my assailant was attacking me from below. Before I had time to reply, or even make sure of the position of the enemy, a bullet struck me in the back.⁵¹

The bullet that hit Jones had been fired from a Pfalz scout.⁵² In one account he wrote the understatement, "I instantly lost interest in the fighting."⁵³ The pain and shock from the injury must have been horrific:

I remember yelling and pushing the control lever forward, and think I must have fallen about 2,000 ft before I could collect my senses sufficiently to think of controlling the machine. The bullet had ripped a big hole in my petrol tank and very soon the petrol was rushing through into the cockpit. Some got through the hole made by the bullet in my Sidcot⁵⁴ suit, and scalded my back rather badly.⁵⁵

The injury was a bullet wound in the right side of his back and was complicated by the fact that the bullet had first passed through the aircraft's petrol tank. Petrol had

⁴⁹ Cutlack writes that the AFC aircrew faced greater danger from German ground fire at this time and that German aircraft were not a great threat. Cutlack also notes George Jones was wounded while returning from the last bombing attack on the evening of 24 March 1918. F.M. Cutlack The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918; The Australian Flying Corps. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1984. p. 235. The Squadron war diary records that the mission took place between 1800 – 1850 hrs.

⁵⁰ The target Jones had selected was a train.

⁵¹ Jones papers. Hand-written notes – WW 1 experiences.

⁵² E.J. Richards Australian Airmen; History of the 4th SQUADRON Australian Flying Corps. Bruce & Co, Melbourne, Vic. p. 15.

⁵³ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁵⁴ The Sidcot suit was a cold resistant flying suit invented during the winter of 1916-17 by the Queensland born aviator Frederick Sidney Cotton. The suit was widely worn by civilian and military aviators up until the 1950s. J. McCarthy Cotton, *Frederick Sidney* entry in Australian Dictionary of Biography. Vol 13. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Vic, 1996. pp 198–199.

leaked from the tank and caused chemical burns to the skin on his back. Although in considerable pain and losing consciousness he levelled out the Camel and at full throttle flew towards his home airfield. It was nearly dark and he landed without crashing by sheer instinct, taxied to the hanger, stopped the aircraft and called to a startled mechanic to lift him out.⁵⁶ Jones then embarked on a long path to recovery,⁵⁷ which included serving as an instructor with the AFC Training Wing at Tetbury in Gloucestershire.⁵⁸

After his period of convalescence, Jones returned to 71 SQN and was promoted to Captain on 4 November 1918. With the promotion came the appointment to Flight Commander of 4 SQN's B Flight.⁵⁹ Jones welcomed the advancement, stating, "It was impossible to hide my delight with this new responsibility."⁶⁰ Jones finished the war with an impressive record. He had spent three years in military service and had risen from Trooper (Private Soldier) to Captain. He had learned to fly, experienced many air combats and had survived aircraft crashes and a serious gunshot wound. As a fighter pilot he was an "ace", having shot down seven German aircraft; he was a flight commander and his combat skills had been recognised with the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross. On the Western Front he had accumulated 235 hours on Sopwith Camels and Snipes; he had flown 150 offensive patrols and 20 bombing raids—all in the space of eight months.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Jones papers. Hand-written notes – WW 1 experiences.

⁵⁶ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli's trenches to CAS.* p. 5.

⁵⁷ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records*—George Jones. Casualty Form – Active Service.

⁵⁸ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records*—George Jones. Officers Record Form.

⁵⁹ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records*—George Jones. Australian Imperial Force. Record of Officers' Service.

⁶⁰ Jones papers. *War Experiences from 1915 to 1918.* The flying component of the Squadron comprised three Flights (A, B and C); each equipped with eight aircraft.

⁶¹ DISPREC 660/3/31 RAAF *Personnel History.* Jones, George. Australian Air Force. Application for a Commission as Flying Officer (Pilot).

The end of the war did not mean that Jones was to return to Australia straight away as 4 SQN went to Germany with the British Army of Occupation.⁶² Nor did the end of the war mean the end of Jones' PTSD problems and in the town of Champion, Belgium, he suffered from another bout of the disorder. On one particular night he had a nightmare and woke up screaming and shouting. His comrades came to his aid and managed to restrain him as he tried to get to his pistol.⁶³ The nightmares with the accompanying screaming and shouting would continue for the rest of his life.⁶⁴

4 SQN was eventually based at Bickendorf (near Cologne) in Germany. There were other Allied air units at this airfield including 48 SQN RAF, which had among its aircrew a young Australian pilot—Lieutenant William D. Bostock. We might wonder whether Jones and Bostock met while they were at Bickendorf.

Marriage and Family Life

On 15 November 1919, within five months of his return to Melbourne, George Jones married Muriel Agnes Cronan. He had met Muriel before the war and corresponded with her during the four years he spent outside Australia.⁶⁵ The marriage service was conducted at the Church of Saint Paul, Malvern, Victoria. This church was an Anglican Church and was selected out of convenience—George was a Methodist and Muriel was a Catholic who did not practice her religion.⁶⁶ Muriel was born in Carlton, Victoria, and was the daughter of William and Elizabeth Cronan. She was 21 (two years younger than George) and worked as a typist.⁶⁷

⁶² C.E.W. Bean The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918; Volume VI; The Australian Imperial Force in France; During the Allied Offensive, 1918. UQP, St Lucia, Qld, 1983. p. 1072.

⁶³ Jones papers. *War Experiences from 1915 to 1918.*

⁶⁴ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones and Mrs Rosemary Ruddell. 16 June 2000.

⁶⁵ G. Jones autobiography p. 27. Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 24 October 2000. AWM MSS1027 *From Private to Air Marshal.*

⁶⁶ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 24 October 2000.

⁶⁷ George Jones/Muriel Agnes Cronan *Certificate of Marriage.* 15 November 1919. Rather oddly, various editions of Who's Who show Muriel to be the daughter of F. Stone.

Marriage may be seen as step upwards in society for Jones. Muriel was educated—she had attended business college and was employed in a clerical position, and she was very talented musically. She recited verse⁶⁸ and was an accomplished pianist who gave public performances, including long recitals at the Regent Theatre. While these talents instilled pride in George Jones,⁶⁹ he made only the briefest mention of Muriel in his autobiography.

George and Muriel Jones' first son, Ronald, was born on 2 October, 1920. As a married couple, they were not close and there was never any open display of affection between them. It is likely that as he grew up without a father, George, (and other members of the Jones family), had learnt to become self sufficient and not to get close to, nor depend on other people. He also had a quiet personality that made him somewhat shy and retiring and he was too involved with himself and his work to have much time for other people. Thus he found it difficult to show affection or interest in other people, including immediate family members.⁷⁰ Ronald would inherit this characteristic.

Jones had been working as a foreman turner for McLashan Bros and Duckett for about a year when Harry Cobby, one of his comrades from 4 SQN, walked into Jones' machine shop and, during the course of their conversation, announced, "I'm going back into the Air Force. I think you ought to come too."⁷¹ Cobby's decision provided Jones with some food for thought. Re-enlistment was something he had not considered before, but the more he thought about it the more interested he became.⁷²

⁶⁸ To assist with her speaking, Muriel Jones took elocution lessons from Richard Williams' wife. C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*.

⁶⁹ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 11 July 2001.

⁷⁰ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 11 July 2001.

⁷¹ Jones papers. Audio tape of interview by Mr Colin Owers; 21 April 1986. Transcribed by Peter Helson, 13 September 2000. G. Jones autobiography. p. 29.

⁷² G. Jones autobiography. p. 29. One wonders whether Cobby walked into the machine shop by sheer coincidence or whether he deliberately sought out Jones, although his motives for doing this are unknown.

Re-enlistment would bring a return to the things he enjoyed and missed in civilian life—flying and the life style of an officer.

Jones Joins the RAAF

On 22 March 1921, George Jones applied to join the Permanent Forces, Australian Air Force.⁷³ On his application he advised he had passed all examinations for Vickers and Lewis machine guns; he had three years experience with motor and mechanical engineering; he had considerable experience in draftsmanship; he was experienced in all branches of iron work; he always took charge of physical training in his own flight during his time in 4 SQN; and he thoroughly understood motor boats.⁷⁴ It is interesting to note one personal detail had changed between his enlistment papers for the AIF and the RAAF—his religion. In 1915 Jones stated he was a Methodist, while his RAAF records show his religion to be Church of England.⁷⁵ His ambitions for a better life style show through here, because he believed he would have a greater chance of advancement in the Service if it were known that he was Anglican rather than any other religion.⁷⁶

After basic training at the Australian Army base at Liverpool NSW, Jones returned to Melbourne and sat for the RAAF entrance confirmation examination. His exam results were not spectacular—he managed to score 66.9%.⁷⁷ After the exam, Williams (the head of the Air Force) oversaw the permanent appointment of the officers joining

⁷³ The Service George Jones joined was, at that time, the Australian Air Force. The start date for the new service was 31 March 1921. It was not until 13 August 1921 that the order, signed by the Governor-General was gazetted, making the title Royal Australian Air Force official. C.D. Coulthard-Clark *The Third Brother*. Allen & Unwin, Nth Sydney, NSW, 1991. p. 34.

⁷⁴ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History*. Jones, George. Australian Air Force. Application for a Commission as Flying Officer (Pilot). p. 5.

⁷⁵ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History*. Jones, George. Personal Record of Service – Officers.

⁷⁶ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 24 October 2000.

⁷⁷ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History*. Jones, George. Personal Record of Service – Officers.

the new Service and rank was initially dependent on exam results. Despite his poor showing in the exam, Jones believed that the allocation of ranks was a reflection on Williams' favoritism towards his former colleagues from 1 SQN AFC.

Jones had been a Captain in the AFC, the same rank as Cobby and H.N. Wrigley (who served with 3 SQN AFC), whereas Bostock had been a Lieutenant in the RFC/RAF. Based on the examination results, Bostock was made a Flight Lieutenant, which put him one rank above Jones, who remained a Flying Officer.⁷⁸ The allocation of ranks would impact severely on the whole Service twenty one years later. In their early years in the RAAF, Jones and Bostock became good friends and remained so for the next twenty years. They would visit each other at home in their spare time and Jones got to know Bostock's children quite well.⁷⁹ Bostock took on the role of advisor and mentor to Jones, providing him with guidance on how he should advance his RAAF career,⁸⁰ although there were times when Jones deplored his friend's competitive attitude.⁸¹

Regardless of rank allocation, George Jones gained recognition and advancement through his enthusiasm and hard work. In late 1922 he had the opportunity to act as OC Workshops, and Squadron Leader Alan Murray Jones, the OC No 1 Station (Point Cook), wrote a favourable report praising George Jones for his excellent work in the acting position. The report pointed out that while he was acting OC Workshops he also retained command of the Motor Transport Repair Section.

Murray Jones' report may have helped Jones as he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant on 1 July 1923. At the same time he was granted a permanent

⁷⁸ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*. Jones papers *Early Days in the Royal Australian Air Force*.

⁷⁹ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*.

⁸⁰ Discussions with Dr Alan Stephens. ADFA. 5 January 2002.

⁸¹ AWM MSS 1027. *From Private to Air Marshal*.

commission.⁸² It was not until two years later, however, that he was appointed OC Workshop Squadron FTS permanently.⁸³ At that time this was the RAAF's only workshop complex.

As a Flight Lieutenant and OC Workshop Squadron, Jones was assessed as being a conscientious and hard working officer. His annual report for 1925, completed by W.H. Anderson noted, when it came to ability, Jones was 'above average' in the duties he performed, in flying duties, technical knowledge, and administrative knowledge. However, Jones' difficulty in dealing with people let him down and he was only rated as 'average' in areas such as power of command, tact in handling personnel and power to impart knowledge.⁸⁴

In April 1926, Jones undertook the RAAF's flying instructor's course and was graded as a 1B Instructor. Flight Lieutenant H.F. de la Rue, the examining officer, commented, "Excellent knowledge of aircraft (of a technical nature). A very keen & reliable pilot."⁸⁵ In February 1927 Flight Lieutenant Jones sat for the flying instructor re-grading test at No 1 FTS. He was assessed as "An instructor of outstanding ability" and was recommended for re-grading as a 1A Instructor.⁸⁶

A Most Capable, Keen and Conscientious Officer

George Jones was promoted to the rank of Squadron Leader on 31 March 1927 and his next posting was as OC Flying Squadron, No 1 FTS. In this position Jones was assessed as being 'average' in dealing with personnel. His zeal in the performance of

⁸² G. Jones autobiography. p. 32.

⁸³ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Record of Service.

⁸⁴ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 1925. 25 Feb 1926.

⁸⁵ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Report on Officer or Cadet on Passing Out from or leaving Schools and Courses of Instruction.

⁸⁶ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Instructors and Pupils – Report on Officer or Cadet on Passing Out from or Leaving Schools and Courses of Instruction. 21 January 1927.

his of his duties was 'above average', and overall his ability was generally 'above average' (especially his knowledge of engines). Jones was:

A steady, painstaking & efficient officer. S/Leader Jones has commanded his squadron with success and to my satisfaction. Throughout the year he has shown energy, forethought & judgement in his service duties.⁸⁷

In late 1927 Jones applied to sit for the RAF Staff College qualifying exam. He applied because at that time he had begun to feel more confident about his future with the RAAF and had aimed for entry to the College as a means of furthering his career.⁸⁸ Three RAAF officers sat the three-day series of test papers and Jones was the only one who passed. He comments cynically on Williams' surprise at the results, saying that he thought there was a mistake with the results and returned the exam papers to London for re-marking.⁸⁹ Jones spent two years in Britain. The first was at the RAF Staff College and the second was on postings to RAF units and visiting aircraft factories. Jones also undertook training at the Central Flying School.

Jones' time at CFS was quite successful and he had a motive for attending the School. He recognised the status, in Australia, attached to qualifications gained in the UK and commented many years later "I had been a flying instructor back at Point

⁸⁷ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 1927.

⁸⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p 41. Jones adds that he knew he would find the exams difficult and studied hard for the various subjects.

⁸⁹ G. Jones autobiography. p 42. The three officers were Jones, F.H. McNamara VC and F. Lukis. McNamara, also a former student of Rushworth school, made several attempts to gain selection. He had been selected for a two year posting to the UK in 1925. While over there, during the following year, he sat the entrance exam for the first time. As noted, he was unsuccessful in 1928 and tried again the following year. Chris Clark notes that McNamara's persistence with the comments that he "readily appreciated that having the initials 'psa' after his name was a useful step towards further advancement." The 1929 exam results were worse as he missed several subjects. He then turned his attention to another form of higher education. Jones' memory may have been a little hazy in relation to McNamara's qualifications at the time of the exam. McNamara resumed his studies, begun before World War One, at the University of Melbourne in 1928, as a part time student, and eventually graduated at the end of 1933 (ie after the examination) with a Bachelor of Arts degree (honours Class 2) in International Relations. C.D. Coulthard-Clark McNamara VC. A Hero's Dilemma. APSC, Canberra, 1997. Lukis attended Andover in 1931.

Cook, but I wanted to attend RAF training to give me a sort of hallmark.”⁹⁰ Despite his difficulties in relating to people, flying instruction was an area of Service employment well suited to Jones and he graduated top of the course with the highest grading attainable.⁹¹ His RAF report showed he was a category ‘A1’ instructor, recommended to instruct on all types of aircraft and was qualified by:

This officer has been very keen and has gained an excellent knowledge of the system of instructing. He demonstrates well and imparts his knowledge in a convincing manner. He flies well with plenty of confidence and his proficiency in aerobatics is much above average. He has had considerable experience as an instructor as an instructor in the R.A.A.F.

Sgd J.M. Robb. S/Ldr. C.F.I.⁹²

Jones took the opportunity to visit every major aircraft factory in the UK because he had been in charge of the RAAF’s only aircraft repair workshop and was very interested in aircraft production.⁹³ More than anything else, the factory visits confirmed Jones’ belief in the establishment of an Australian aircraft industry because he was able to observe manufacturing techniques and was aware that the same sort of work could be done by factories in Australia. For the rest of his life Jones maintained his belief in Australia’s capacity to produce military aircraft.

On his return from Britain in October 1930, Squadron Leader George Jones moved to the position of OC of the Flying Training Squadron (1 FTS), based at Point Cook.⁹⁴ In addition to being OC 1 FTS he was also the RAAF’s Chief Flying Instructor. This

⁹⁰ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic 21 Jan 88*.

⁹¹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 45. In another source Jones claims he graduated second from the top. Jones papers *I qualify for the R.A.F. Staff College and spend two years in England*.

⁹² DISPREC 660/3/31 RAAF *Personnel History. Jones, George*. RAF Form 364 “Report on Officer or Airman Pilot passing out from or on leaving a Flying Instructor’s Refresher Course at the Central Flying School.” 17 April 1930. J.M. Robb had a long career with the RAF and during the Second World War, as Air Vice-Marshal Sir James Robb, became AOC, 2 Group RAF. M.J.F. Bowyer 2 Group RAF. A Complete History. Crecy Books, Bodmin, Cornwall, UK, 1992. p. 78.

⁹³ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic 21 Jan 88*. G. Jones autobiography. p. 46.

⁹⁴ Jones papers *Flying Training at Point Cook as Chief Instructor*.

made Jones responsible for examining and grading all the Service's flying instructors⁹⁵ (including himself) on all aircraft types.

Perhaps Jones gained some additional 'people skills' during his time at the Staff College because in his annual report for 1930/31 he was assessed as being 'exceptional' in his ability to deal with personnel as well as in his zeal in the performance of his duties. The assessment of his tact was short lived, however, and future assessments in this regard would not be as positive. He was also rated as 'exceptional' in his current and flying duties. The assessing officer, F.H. McNamara VC, made the following remarks:

A very capable and conscientious squadron leader. He has done very good work in command of the Training Squadron and in addition has loyally and actively assisted me in many other aspects of the Flying Training School as a whole.⁹⁶

Through the early 1930s Jones' annual reports recognised and praised his skills and abilities. Jones himself believed his early life in the 'bush' helped him in his career in the RAAF. He claimed:

I didn't give myself any airs and it was very hard for me to think I was different from a lot of other people. I couldn't be seen to be different because I remembered my humble beginnings, shall we say.⁹⁷

Another step upwards in his career came on 16 November 1931, when Jones succeeded Bostock as Director of Training, at RAAF Headquarters. He stayed in this position until 19 April 1936.⁹⁸ This new job meant a change of work place from Point Cook to RAAF HQ in Melbourne. Jones would remain at RAAF HQ, working in different positions, for the rest of his Air Force career. He would, however, have the

⁹⁵ G. Jones, autobiography. p. 48.

⁹⁶ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George. Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 1930/31.*

⁹⁷ D. Gadd *War veteran finds peace* in Herald-Sun. 21 April 1992. p. 52.

occasional break from HQ as he visited bases as part of his duties. As Director of Training, Jones was responsible for the syllabus of training at the FTS and Service squadrons. He was also responsible for developing specialist courses and training standards in areas such as armament, navigation and signals.⁹⁹ It would be reasonable to expect that because of the nature of the work, Jones gained a good all-round knowledge of the RAAF's activities at that time.

George Jones' excellent work performance continued to be noted by his supervisors. In his 1931/32 annual report he was assessed as 'exceptional' in the performance of his duties. In so far as technical knowledge was concerned it was reported he was, "Above average. Has had some practical technical training" while his staff work was 'exceptional'. Jones also rated 'exceptional' for his general standard of professional knowledge. Jimmy Goble, Jones' CO, concluded the report with, "A most capable, keen and conscientious officer, whose high all round qualifications fit him for any command or senior staff appointment."¹⁰⁰

The 1932/33 annual report again assessed Jones to be 'exceptional' in the performance of his duties; in flying duties; and in staff work. He was 'above average' in technical knowledge; administrative knowledge; and in his power to impart knowledge. W.H. Anderson described him as, "An exceptionally keen and capable officer."¹⁰¹ Similarly the report for the following year assessed Jones to be 'exceptional' or 'above average' against the majority of reporting criteria, with

⁹⁸ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Personal Record of Service – Officers. Bostock took over as CO of 3 SQN, based at Richmond NSW.

⁹⁹ Jones papers *My Experience as a Staff Officer – Director of Training, Director of Personnel Services, Assistant Chief of Air Staff.*

¹⁰⁰ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 1931/32.

¹⁰¹ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 1932/33.

Anderson commenting “Another excellent year’s work.”¹⁰² Jones requalified as an A1 Instructor twice during 1933. On the first occasion, on 19 January, F.R.W. Scherger assessed him to be a most accurate and capable pilot and a very able instructor.¹⁰³ At the second test in June 1933, the examining officer, Squadron Leader J.H. Summers considered Jones to be a very sound pilot with the qualification “Must guard against tendency of being too firm in the handling of aircraft.” When it came to his ability to instruct, Jones was reported to have a sound knowledge of patten and his ability in relation to instructional demonstrations and explanations was very good. As Director of Training, Jones recommended his own Category A1 grading on both occasions.¹⁰⁴

While things were going well for Jones’ career, he had become even more remote from his home life (the Jones family, at this time, was living at 15 Maple Crescent, Camberwell.¹⁰⁵) Ian Jones, George and Muriel’s second son, was born on 26 June 1934. George Jones was 38 when Ian was born and he was not too enthusiastic about the prospect of another son. After Ronald, George Jones had become disillusioned with children and told Muriel that she was, “mad wanting another child.” As it turned out, Ian developed a different personality to that of his father and brother and, as a child, he and mother became very close.¹⁰⁶

In addition to his duties as Director of Training, Jones was given another job, albeit part time. On 17 March 1934 he began a six year appointment as an Aide de Camp (ADC) to the Governor General of Australia (Sir Isaac Isaacs and then Baron

¹⁰² DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Annual Confidential Report (Officers) for 1933/34.

¹⁰³ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Report on Passing Out or on Leaving a Flying Instructors’ Course or on Instructors’ Passing Test. 3 February 1933.

¹⁰⁴ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Report on Passing Out or on Leaving a Flying Instructors’ Course or on Instructors’ Passing Test. 30 June 1933.

¹⁰⁵ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Statutory Declaration. 20 July 1934.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 11 July 2001.

Gowrie).¹⁰⁷ This position would have introduced him to a different stratum of government and society and he would have met politicians, state governors, senior military and government officials, and members of the clergy and judiciary. The tasks associated with the position were simple enough—when Isaacs or Gowrie visited Melbourne, the Navy, Army and RAAF ADCs were at the railway station or airport to receive, or farewell, him. A few times each year Jones would accompany the Governor General to a social function or event, usually in the evening and Muriel also would have been asked to attend. At other times Jones would have represented the Governor General at official functions and one expects he would have been very proud to attend in this capacity.¹⁰⁸

After reading so many good reports on George Jones' personal file, a few questions come to mind. Why, when he was continually given the highest rating (ie 'Exceptional') for so many criteria, was Jones never recommended for accelerated promotion? How was it that he was constantly rated as an A1 Instructor with very good ability to instruct when his ability to deal with personnel usually was rated as 'Average'? In answer to the first question, in a new and very small Service there was no position into which Jones could be promoted. That is, in the 1930s many of the RAAF senior officers were in the 30-40 age group and they were still a long way from retirement.¹⁰⁹ In the small Service, suffering from resource cutbacks due to the Depression, there were few senior positions and therefore it is likely that the only way

¹⁰⁷ Each Defence Service appointed an ADC in each Australian state, so Jones was the RAAF ADC for Victoria.

¹⁰⁸ Jones makes no mention of his appointment as ADC in his autobiography. However, Lawrence Wackett was the RAAF ADC in Sydney and briefly mentions the tasks associated with the position in his autobiography. It is quite reasonable to assume Jones undertook similar tasks in Melbourne. L.J. Wackett *Aircraft Pioneer*. Angus & Robertson, Cremorne, NSW, 1972. pp 107 – 108.

¹⁰⁹ Williams was born in 1890; Goble in 1891; Wrigley and Bostock in 1892; MacKinolty in 1895; L.J. Wackett and Jones in 1896; and Bladin in 1898. Alan Stephens and J Isaacs *High Fliers*. AGPS, Canberra. 1996.

an extraordinary promotion could take place would be if a senior officer died or resigned.

To answer the second question we must also consider Jones' personality. From the reports, we get a picture of a very conscientious officer, with a good technical and administrative knowledge and with a good ability to impart flying knowledge. What appears to have let down Jones' character was his inability to deal with Service personnel. However, this is most likely a result of Jones' overall personality. As an adult, generally he did not relate very well with other people (Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt observed that Jones was not a 'face to face' person¹¹⁰). Instead he found the satisfaction that others would find in companionship in aspects of his employment, such as flying or working with machinery.¹¹¹

There is now a reason for the cause of Jones' inability to relate to other people. It is possible he may have suffered from a neurobiological disorder known as Asperger Syndrome (AS).¹¹² Persons with AS can exhibit a variety of characteristics and the disorder may range from mild to severe. Some of the characteristics can be:

- Speech is sometimes stilted and repetitive;
- Voice tends to be emotionless and flat;
- Obsessed with complex topics; and
- Often described as eccentric.

Persons with AS show marked deficiencies in social skills, have difficulties with transitions and changes and prefer sameness.¹¹³ Regardless of the possibility of

¹¹⁰ J.E. Hewitt *Adversity in Success*. p. 86.

¹¹¹ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 11 July 2001.

¹¹² Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 21 Feb 2003.

¹¹³ B.L. Kirby *What is Asperger Syndrome* at www.udel/bkirby/asperger/aswhatitisit.html S.M. Edelson *Asperger's Syndrome* at www.autism.org/asperger.html The disorder was named after the person who first described it—Viennese physician Dr Hans Asperger, who published a paper, in 1944, in which he described the behaviour patterns of boys who had normal intelligence and language development but who also displayed autistic-like behaviour. Despite having been described in

suffering from the disorder, George Jones was able to undertake the duties of his position to the highest level and was praised for his work.

Jones' career moved in another direction, but it was still away from aircraft production. He was promoted to Wing Commander on 1 January 1936 and his next posting was in March 1936, when he moved from Director of Training to Director for Personnel Services.¹¹⁴ In this position he was responsible for the policy and decisions relevant to the promotions, postings and disciplinary matters for all Service members.¹¹⁵ This position gave him a new insight into the RAAF's senior management structure and fuelled his ambition. While working on officer career planning activities, Jones arrived at the realisation that, because of his age and with reasonable luck, he could expect to reach the Service's top position—Chief of the Air Staff—(CAS) during his Service career.¹¹⁶ Jones remained as Director for Personnel Services for two years before being appointed Director of Recruiting in March 1938.¹¹⁷ On 1 December 1939 Jones was made a temporary Group Captain and on 21 February 1941 he was advanced to be an acting Air Commodore.¹¹⁸

In addition to his regular RAAF duties, Jones undertook some extraordinary activities during the 1920s and 30s. These included staging air shows; the 1935

1944, it was not until 1994 that AS was recognised by health professionals. At the time this thesis was drafted there was still some debate within professional circles as to where AS belongs. It is described as an autism spectrum disorder, while some professionals believe it is the same as High Functioning Autism. The disorder is probably hereditary and may be passed on to descendants. Therefore, it is also possible Ronald Jones may have inherited AS from his father.

¹¹⁴ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Personal Record of Service – Officers.

¹¹⁵ G. Jones, autobiography. p. 60. Jones claimed that he did no flying while he was in this position. Strangely (one expects him to undertake a small amount of flying each year) the claim may be correct. There is a gap in his log book between 27 April 1936 and 18 June 1940. One wonders whether he was even given an annual assessment by the Chief Flying Instructor. RAAF Museum. G. Jones box file. *Flying Log Book* - Group Captain G. Jones.

¹¹⁶ Jones papers. *My experience as a Staff Officer – Director of Training, Director of Personnel Services, Assistant Chief of Air Staff*. Jones added, "This subsequently became true, but much sooner than I anticipated."

¹¹⁷ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Personal Record of Service – Officers.

Geological Survey Flight; and representing the RAAF at the 1939 Australia – New Zealand – United Kingdom Defence Conference.

While his Service career progressed satisfactorily, things continued to go badly for Jones' home life and by 1938 he had virtually disowned his oldest son. Even though Ronald continued to live with his family, his father made no mention of him on official RAAF documents relating to family matters.¹¹⁹ As has been mentioned earlier, George Jones did not relate well to other people and Ronald inherited this characteristic. To make the situation worse, Ronald had even greater difficulties in dealing with people than his father. George Jones found this an impossible problem to deal with (possibly because of his own lack of interest in people) and the two would quarrel frequently. Jones senior did not understand Ronald and could not deal with him. He thus tended to distance himself from his son and by the late 1930s had "given up on him."¹²⁰

In all, Jones was a complex man and it was this complex man that Minister for Air Arthur Drakeford sought to appoint as CAS in May 1942. Jones had gained considerable experience in all manner of Service administration and training activities; and he was a keen pilot. These favourable characteristics are balanced against his inability to deal with people and his tendency to put his work before his family. By 1942 he had not had the opportunity to gain a great deal of operational experience but few other RAAF officers had this opportunity. When comparing his Service record with contemporary officers one gains the impression that Jones possibly had as good a claim as anyone else to the CAS position.

¹¹⁸ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Personal Record of Service – Officers.

¹¹⁹ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Statutory Declaration. 18 July 1938. This document shows the Jones family still living in Camberwell, with Ian listed as the only child.

¹²⁰ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 11 July 2001.

II

THE DARKEST OF DARK HORSES

On 5 May 1942 acting Air Commodore George Jones was appointed Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). As there were other officers senior to Jones, his appointment came as a surprise to most, except for the politicians who comprised the Federal Cabinet. Possibly no one was more surprised by the appointment than Jones himself, as he expected a fellow officer, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, to be appointed to the Service's highest position.¹ Jones' appointment has remained a controversial incident in the history of the RAAF, but before it can be determined whether it was an appropriate appointment, it should be viewed in light of the events relating to the Service's high command in the few years before and after the outbreak of the Second World War. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the factors associated with Jones' appointment.

RAAF High Command Prior to the Second World War

The command of the RAAF went through a period of confusion during the course of the war. Air Marshal Richard Williams (the first RAAF CAS) had fallen out of favour with the Government, following the unfavorable review, in 1938, of the Service by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Edward Ellington (an Inspector-General of the RAF).² Williams was "effectively banished from office"³ shortly

¹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 83.

² Ellington arrived in Australia in June 1938 at the invitation of the Lyons government, to conduct an inspection of the RAAF. Ellington's report was best remembered for its criticism of the RAAF's flying accidents and led to Williams' removal from office as CAS. Jones' opinion was that Ellington had been invited by the Australian Government to inspect Williams rather than the RAAF and to recommend his removal from the CAS position, if necessary. Alan Stephens Power plus Attitude. AGPS, Canberra, 1992. p 46. J. McCarthy Australia and Imperial Defence: A Study in Air and Sea Power. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, QLD, 1976. pp. 84 – 92. Alan Stephens has also made the comment that Williams was removed from office because, after nearly

before the beginning of the war, when, in February 1939, he was sent on a two year posting to Britain as Air Officer in Charge of Administration (AOA) with the Royal Air Force (RAF) Coastal Command.⁴ His replacement was Air Vice-Marshal Stanley J. "Jimmy" Goble, who was appointed CAS on an acting basis.⁵ Goble had served as CAS on two previous occasions while Williams was overseas. A powerful and detrimental rivalry had developed between the two officers to the extent that it became common knowledge they could not work together at the same headquarters.⁶ So by the outbreak of the Second World War, the higher levels of the RAAF had already experienced considerable turmoil based on disagreements between the most senior officers.

Goble was now to experience difficulties in his command of the RAAF that would alienate him from the Government and would set a precedent as to how the Government would deal with personality problems in the Service. Air Commodore John Russell was an RAF officer who had been posted to Australia in exchange for Williams. Goble soon found himself drawn into personal conflict with Russell.

George Jones, who at the time was a Wing Commander and the RAAF Director of Recruiting, was appointed Assistant CAS on 1 July 1939.⁷ Despite its apparent closeness to the CAS, this position was not one with as much power as the title suggests. A few months after Jones moved into his new position, Group Captain

20 years of political infighting on behalf of the RAAF he had made too many enemies. Alan Stephens and J. Isaacs High Flyers. p. 32.

³ NLA TRC 121/52 *Recorded Interview with Sir Frederick Scherger*. p. 10. Alan Stephens *The Office of Chief of the Air Staff* in Alan Stephens (ed) Australia's Air Chiefs. APSC, Canberra, 1992. p. 6.

⁴ R. Williams These are Facts. AWM, Canberra, 1977. p. 245.

⁵ Goble served as CAS between November 1922 and February 1925; December 1932 and January 1934; February 1939 and January 1940. Dept of Air The Golden Years. AGPS, Canberra, 1971. pp.112 – 113.

⁶ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p. 360. There was an allegation that the relationship between Williams and Goble was so bad that a practice evolved of separating them by keeping one of the out of the country at any given time.

⁷ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History*. Jones, George. Personal Record of Service – Officers.

Bostock was appointed Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (DCAS) on 1 September 1939.⁸ Initially the Service maintained the positions of Assistant CAS and DCAS concurrently. The DCAS position, however, gained greater power and eventually superseded that of the Assistant CAS. The main difference between the positions was that DCAS was given the authority to act for CAS (something the Assistant CAS was not empowered to do). DCAS was also made a member of the Joint Planning Committee.⁹ In practice this meant that while Jones was working within the Service Headquarters, he was more of a senior personal assistant to CAS, while Bostock had the power to act as CAS in the event of the Chief's absence. Appointment to the DCAS position was initially to Bostock's advantage. Regardless of the status of his position, Jones' work must have been quite satisfactory because after working as Assistant CAS for five months, he was made a temporary Group Captain.¹⁰ While Jones was advancing in his own career, the RAAF was to undergo another change in leaders.

At the outbreak of the war in September 1939, the Australian Government, headed by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, considered the role of Australia's armed forces was largely to provide support and assistance to Britain, based on a proposition of Japan's neutrality. Insofar as the deployment of the RAAF was concerned, the Government examined three initiatives, the first of which was an expeditionary air force proposed by Goble, Jones and Wing Commander Swinborne.¹¹ The second was

⁸ Jones papers. *The Organisation and Administration of the Empire Air Training Scheme*. In this paper Jones claims Bostock became DCAS, "by methods which I thought very unfair." Unfortunately Jones does not spell out what those methods were. Prior to his appointment as DCAS, Bostock had been Director of Operations and Intelligence.

⁹ Douglas Gillison *Australia in the War of 1939 - 1945*; *Royal Australian Air Force 1939 - 1942*. AWM, Canberra, 1962. pp. 69 - 70.

¹⁰ RAAF Discharged Personnel Section. Index Card - Officers. *Jones, Sir George*. Jones was made temporary Group Captain on 1 December 1939.

¹¹ NLA TRC 121/52 *Recorded Interview with Sir Frederick Scherger*. p. 11. NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting*. 9 October 1939, Minute (28) "Air Expeditionary Force". This force was to be sent to Britain and would be manned by 3,200 personnel who were to be placed in

the transfer of 10 Squadron to Britain.¹² Finally there was a scheme to provide Britain with trained or partially trained aircrew for deployment with the RAF. This became the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) and George Jones played a part in its establishment.

Despite these initiatives, the command of the Service was an issue for the Government. The foreshadowed conflict between Goble and Russell (who was in the position of Air Member for Personnel¹³) came to the fore in October 1939, when Goble advised G.A. Street, the Minister for Defence, that Russell had refused to adjust to local conditions and regulations and that he had shown a marked inconsistency and unreliability in his statements and opinions on Service matters. Goble told Street that Russell's attitude made him unsuitable for an Air Board or command appointments. The following month Goble sent a minute to Street in which he documented examples of Russell's unsuitable behaviour and asked for the situation to be resolved.¹⁴

When no resolution from the Australian Government was forthcoming, Goble took his own action and sent a signal to Air Chief Marshal Sir Cyril Newall (the RAF CAS) requesting Russell's recall. He continued by stating it would be impossible to

an organisation comprising a Field Force HQ, a fighter wing (made up of an HQ and two fighter squadrons), two bomber wings (each made up of an HQ and two bomber squadrons); No 1 Air Stores Park; No 1 Medical Receiving Station; an HQ Base Area; a Base Depot; and reserves. In early October 1939 the Australian War Cabinet considered the expeditionary air force's formation and agreed that it should include the minimum number of Permanent Air Force (PAF) personnel. Instead it would be made up of new volunteers into the RAAF while PAF personnel would be retained in Australia for local defence and to develop other air power initiatives to contribute to Empire Air Defence.

¹² The RAAF had ordered Short Sunderland flying boats from Britain to equip 10 Squadron, which was to be based at Rathmines in NSW. Aircrew had traveled to Britain and were preparing to fly the first three aircraft back to Australia when the war began. 10 Squadron spent the war conducting maritime operations from Britain. S. Wilson Anson, Hudson and Sunderland in Australian Service. Aerospace Publications Ltd, Weston Creek, 1992. pp. 160 – 162.

¹³ Douglas Gillison Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945. Royal Australian Air Force. p. 67.

¹⁴ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p. 460.

implement EATS if Russell remained as AMP as it was a position that required stability and a sound knowledge of training.¹⁵

The RAF officer may well have undermined Goble's plans for the RAAF's war effort, as he had advised Sir Frederick Shedden (the Secretary of the Department of Defence) that EATS was viewed by the British government as vital to their war effort, thus he considered the RAAF should abandon the idea of the expeditionary air force.¹⁶ We may wonder why this officer was allowed to approach a senior public servant with neither the knowledge nor consent of the Service chief. The Australian Government finally sent Russell back to Britain after the situation had become so bad for Goble that he attempted to resign from the RAAF.¹⁷

The Government was becoming disillusioned with the RAAF senior leadership and moves, by Cabinet, were underway at an early stage to import some expertise from Britain. The formation of the expeditionary air force and participation in EATS led Menzies, in early October 1939, to approach the British Government for the loan of a "thoroughly competent R.A.F. Officer" with a rank senior to Williams and Goble to be appointed as the RAAF's CAS in place of the Australian officers.¹⁸ These moves were being conducted without any official consultation with Goble, although the Secretary of the Air Board had unofficially advised him.¹⁹ Goble, who believed the RAAF's contribution to the war effort should be organised as a self contained national unit, continued to develop his plans for the expeditionary air force.²⁰ Despite his planning, the Government abandoned the idea in early November 1939 and instead it

¹⁵ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p 461.

¹⁶ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p 462.

¹⁷ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting*. 22 December 1939, Minute (103) "Resignation of Air Vice-Marshal S.J. Goble, Chief of the Air Staff.

¹⁸ J. Robertson & J. McCarthy Australian War Strategy 1939 – 1945. A Documentary History. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1985. p. 52.

¹⁹ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p. 462.

²⁰ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p. 460.

was decided the full resources of the RAAF would be devoted to EATS, while 10 Squadron would remain in the UK (and would be placed under RAF control).²¹

On 11 November 1939 Menzies announced changes to the War Cabinet and the Government's administration restructure. These changes included the establishment of separate departments, each with its own minister to oversee the defence Services. The Department of Air was set up with Melville Langslow as its secretary and James V. Fairbairn was made the Minister for Air. The Finance Members of the Service boards were appointed as Secretaries of the new Departments (ie Langslow had been the Air Board's Finance Member since July 1936. He retained this position until July 1940.) These appointments were part of the Government's plan for effective administration and control of war expenditure because it was thought that Ministers from the large spending Service Departments would have Secretaries with expert financial knowledge as advisors.²² At the time of their establishment it was expected that the Service Departments would be temporary entities and would exist for the duration of the war. Therefore no amendment had been made to the Defence Act or the Air Force Act or Regulations to suitably define the functions of the Department of Air and its Secretary.²³ This lack of legislation did not affect the new Department carrying out its work, which was to provide the basic RAAF administration and financial functions, previously undertaken by civilian staff in Department of Defence. This included: the executive functions previously carried out by the Defence Secretariat; clerical work associated with the Air Board and the branches of CAS, the

²¹ NAA A5954/803/1. *Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting*. 1 Nov 1939, Minute (76) "Australian Contribution to Empire Air Defence." Had the three initiatives been agreed, the RAAF would have found itself in the position of having competing requirements for trained personnel between the expeditionary air force and EATS.

²² NAA M2740/1/240. *Civil Staffing – Department of Air. Functions and Responsibilities of the Permanent Head*. Paper titled "New Departments. Appointment of Secretaries." 13 Nov 1939.

²³ NAA M2740/1/240. Paper titled "Functions and Responsibilities of Department of Air and Permanent Head – Need for Authoritative Definition of." September 1949. Despite its temporary nature the Department of Air remained in existence until the early 1970s.

AMP, & AMOE; the work of the Finance Branch (Air); and internal audit. In terms of personnel numbers, the new Department grew steadily and by 30 June 1945 its staff numbered 4,507.²⁴

One of Fairbairn's first tasks as Minister for Air was to lead a group known as the Australian Air Mission, to represent Australia's interests at the Ottawa Conference, which formulated the agreements governing EATS. George Jones was selected as the RAAF representative with the Mission. After completing the EATS negotiations, Fairbairn and his secretary (R.E. Elford) took with them a copy of Jones' report on the proceedings—Report on Air Training Conference Held at Ottawa from 2nd November to 27th November 1939²⁵ and traveled to Britain, before returning to Australia. It was more than two months before the War Cabinet considered Jones' report. Jones accompanied Fairbairn (who, by that time, had returned to Australia) to the Cabinet meeting. Jones noted, "the only papers submitted were my report and an estimate of the costs. Despite the costs, which ran into some hundreds of millions of pounds, Cabinet approved it completely, after a short discussion."²⁶ The Cabinet minutes of the discussion were brief "The report of the Australian Air Mission which represented the Commonwealth at the Empire Air Conference at Ottawa in November, 1939, was noted by the War Cabinet."²⁷

²⁴ NAA M2740/1/240. "Committee of Review – Civil Staffing of Wartime Activities. Report on the Department of Air." 19 December 1945.

²⁵ NAA A1969/100/547/ALO OTTAWA/s17 *Report for Air Liaison Officer from G. Jones (RAAF Liaison Office Ottawa) Report on Air Training Conference Held at Ottawa from 2nd November to 27th November 1939*. Written for the Minister for Air by Wing Commander G. Jones R.A.A.F. 27th November, 1939. Ottawa.

²⁶ Jones papers. *The Empire Air Training Scheme (to the attack on Pearl Harbour)*.

²⁷ NAA A 5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. 6 Feb 1940, Minute (155) "Agendum No 20/1940 – Report of the Australian Air Mission which represented the Commonwealth at the Empire Air Conference at Ottawa, November 1939."

On 21 December 1939, Menzies advised Cabinet he had received Goble's resignation both from the CAS position and from the RAAF.²⁸ The PM met with Goble on 23 December and questioned him over the reasons for his resignation. CAS gave as his excuse the impossible working relationship with Russell.²⁹ Goble had also found himself in an untenable position when the expeditionary air force was rejected in favour of EATS,³⁰ and his personality did not help in this situation. Goble was gregarious and affable³¹ (as opposed to Williams who was seen as stiff necked and authoritarian³²). Unfortunately these characteristics, which might have made him popular with his fellow officers,³³ were of no help when dealing with politicians and Goble proved to be unable to handle the pressure of the senior command appointment and the political environment.³⁴ Goble was prepared to withdraw his resignation after Russell had been sent back to Britain. He had also said that he intended to go to Britain and offer his services, in any capacity, to the RAF.³⁵ However, at his meeting with Menzies, Goble was told that he could remain with the RAAF but not as its Chief, because the Government planned to seek a replacement CAS from the RAF. The Government's preference was for this officer to be someone with considerable

²⁸ Goble spoke with newspaper reporters on 19 December 1939 and gave the following reasons for his resignation:- he was dissatisfied with his relationship with the Government; and the decision to proceed with EATS rather than the expeditionary air force. *Resignation Confirmed by Air Staff Chief* in The Herald, 20 December 1939. *Air Chief wishes to resign* in The Argus, 20 December 1939. *War Cabinet holds important meeting today* in The Herald, 21 December 1939.

²⁹ Goble sent his resignation to the Government on 19 December 1939. The letter, however, was mishandled and did not reach Menzies until after news of the resignation was published in the newspapers. C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother, p. 460. Therefore the first the PM and the Minister for Air knew about it was when they read the newspaper. *Resignation Confirmed by Air Staff Chief*.

³⁰ E.M. Weller *A Characterisation of Leadership and Command in the RAAF*. Paper presented at the RAAF History Conference, 1999.

³¹ Alan Stephens and J. Isaacs High Flyers, p. 33.

³² D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal* in Over the Front, Vol 7, No 2, 1992. p. 99. R. Hunt Australian Air Aces. Horwitz Publications, Sydney, NSW, 1962. p. 65. Alan Stephens and J. Isaacs High Flyers, p. 31

³³ Jones claimed that he liked Goble because "He wasn't so [sic] competitive as Williams." Competition, in any form was one thing Jones detested to the extent he played very few sports himself (tennis and lawn bowls later in life) and showed no interest at all in the major competitive sports such as cricket or football.

³⁴ E.M. Weller *A Characterisation of Leadership and Command in the RAAF*.

experience and with seniority to Goble.³⁵ A precedent had thus been set for the Government of the day not to support the CAS in the resolution of disputes with other officers and the regime that followed Menzies would maintain this precedent.

Goble's resignation did nothing to restore the Government's confidence in the RAAF's leadership and Menzies continued with his proposal to secure the appointment of an RAF officer to serve as CAS. The main reason Fairbairn had for visiting Britain in December 1939 (following the EATS negotiations in Canada) was that he had been tasked by Cabinet to interview RAF officers who had been nominated as suitable for appointment as the RAAF's CAS.³⁷ Back in Australia, Cabinet discussed the possibility of approaching the British government for the loan of one of the officers interviewed by Fairbairn and before the decision was finalised, it was agreed to direct the Australian High Commissioner to Britain, S.M. Bruce, to make confidential enquiries and to "advise personally on the relative merits of Air Vice-Marshal Sir Charles Burnett and Air Vice-Marshal Sir John Steel."³⁸

On 22 December 1939, Cabinet further considered the appointment to the RAAF's most senior position and the fate of the Service's two most senior officers. It was agreed Goble's resignation as CAS would be accepted but he would be asked to

³⁵ *Air Chief wishes to resign. Resignation Confirmed by Air Staff Chief.*

³⁶ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *The Third Brother*. p. 462.

³⁷ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *The Third Brother*. p. 463. Jones' opinion was that Fairbairn had served with the RFC during the First World War and this may have inclined him to support the Cabinet push for an RAF officer. G. Jones autobiography. p. 77. Jones, however, was incorrect as Fairbairn initially favoured reappointing Williams as CAS. Menzies and Casey wanted an RAF officer and they had their way. Alan Stephens *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume II. The Royal Australian Air Force*. Oxford University Press. South Melbourne, 2001. p. 114.

³⁸ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting*. 21 Dec 1939. Minute (94) "Resignation of Air Vice-Marshal Goble." Steel and Burnett were the two officers the RAF was prepared to make available to the RAAF. Following the 1936 reorganisation of the RAF, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Steel was appointed head of Bomber Command, while Burnett had headed Training Command. Steel, at the time of the Australian Cabinet discussions, had retired and was aged 62. R.G. Casey (the Minister for Supply and Development) nominated him as being suitable for the RAAF CAS position.

reconsider resigning his commission. As Goble's health was said to be suffering,³⁹ Cabinet agreed he would be given several weeks leave and then offered a post, at the rank of Air Commodore, with the EATS administration in Canada. Williams, however, would not be reinstated as CAS and Cabinet decided he was to remain with the RAF until the termination of his two-year placement. With Goble in Canada, and Williams remaining in Britain, the RAAF was in the position where its two senior officers were posted outside Australia, so there was an urgent need to appoint someone as CAS. Cabinet then made an extraordinary decision—Menzies was to discuss with the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) the possibility of obtaining the services of Commodore Boucher, the Second Naval Member, to act as CAS until the arrival of a suitable officer from England.⁴⁰ One might wonder how low the Government's confidence in the RAAF officer corps had become when an RAN officer was considered to head the Service. We might well ask the question why DCAS or the Assistant CAS were not appointed to act in the position for a few months until the arrival of the 'suitable' officer? Perhaps Cabinet was so disillusioned with the RAAF's senior command that these two Goble appointees were considered as unsuitable.

Common sense may have prevailed as Cabinet gave up its idea of appointing Boucher as CAS and Air Commodore W.H. Anderson (the Air Member for Supply) was chosen to act as CAS.⁴¹ One new task, stemming from the wartime situation, imposed upon Anderson as CAS (and the other two Service chiefs), was to provide a

³⁹ Newspaper reports at the time of his resignation stated that Goble was suffering from influenza. *Resignation Confirmed by Air Staff Chief*.

⁴⁰ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. Dec 22, 1939. Minute (103) "Resignation of Air Vice-Marshal S.J. Goble, Chief of the Air Staff". Boucher's qualification for the position appears to be that he served as a pilot with the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) during the Great War.

⁴¹ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. Jan 4, 1940, Minute (112) "Agendum No 8/1940 – Selection of Royal Air Force Officer as Chief of the Air Staff, and Resignation of Air Vice Marshal S.J. Goble as Chief of the Air Staff."

weekly report of their Service's activities to Cabinet. Anderson, accompanied by Bostock (who remained DCAS), attended the Cabinet meeting in their official capacities for the first time on 24 January 1940.⁴²

A Suitable RAF Officer

The Australian Government's attitude towards the RAAF's high command and the prospect of an RAF officer heading their Service was a source of disappointment to many RAAF officers. This disappointment increased when they learned of Fairbairn's selection—Sir Charles Burnett.⁴³ With hindsight we can look at things differently to those officers.

If the proposed major role of the RAAF was to be a training institution for the RAF (ie through EATS), Burnett probably had as much claim, through experience, as any RAF officer to the CAS position. In fact, Fairbairn explained to the Australian Parliament, Burnett was selected because no RAAF officer had experience on a comparable scale.⁴⁴ Despite the Anglophile overtones of Menzies' government, this was probably a reasonable explanation given the very small size of the pre war RAAF. Following the May 1936 restructuring of the RAF, Training Command had been established with Air Marshal Burnett as its head.⁴⁵ He successfully presided over the Command between 1936–39, where he had the highly responsible task of building up the RAF for the forthcoming war.⁴⁶ At the time of his selection as RAAF CAS, Burnett was one of the two Inspector-Generals of the RAF, a position Williams described as a means of continuing the employment of an officer who had completed

⁴² NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. Jan 24, 1940, "Weekly Progress Reports by Chiefs of Staff (No 1 – Week ended 20th January 1940)."

⁴³ Alan Stephens and J. Isaacs *High Flyers*. p. 47.

⁴⁴ CPD (Representatives) 15 May 1940. p. 857.

⁴⁵ J. Terraine *The Right of the Line*. Wordsworth Editions, Ware, UK, 1997. p. 23.

⁴⁶ Alan Stephens and J. Isaacs *High Flyers*. p. 49. Burnett was appointed AOC in Chief of Training Command on 1 May 1936. His replacement was Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, who was appointed on 1 July 1939. Burnett therefore had only been in the position of Inspector-General for

a term in a senior appointment and who had only a short period to serve before his retirement.⁴⁷ Up until his appointment Burnett had not been to Australia. However, he had served with Williams in the Middle East in 1918.⁴⁸ Williams himself had corresponded with Burnett (initially as the RAF's DCAS and then as the Air Ministry's delegate in Geneva) in a means to gain advice and support during the early 1930s when the Australian Prime Minister, J.A. Lyons, had proposed to disband the RAAF as a demonstration of Australia's attitude towards world disarmament.⁴⁹

At the War Cabinet meeting on 4 January 1940, Fairbairn outlined his negotiations for the return of Williams from the Coastal Command position and the loan of Burnett. Fairbairn had acted alone, when making his selection and the subsequent agreements, without permission from his Government, as the Cabinet minute notes:

Mr Fairbairn explained that, under an erroneous impression that he had full authority to make an appointment to the post of Chief of the Air Staff, he had entered into a commitment with Air Marshal Sir Charles Burnett, who was in his view the outstanding officer of those available for selection.⁵⁰

Cabinet approved Fairbairn's recommendation after Menzies had emphasised that appointments to senior posts, such as Heads of Departments and Services, were the prerogative of Cabinet, not of individual Ministers.⁵¹ It was agreed that Burnett, with the rank of Air Chief Marshal⁵² should be appointed CAS for one year with an option

six months when he was selected as RAAF CAS. D. Richards Royal Air Force 1939 – 1945. Volume 1, The Fight at Odds. HMSO, London, 1954. pp. 404 – 405.

⁴⁷ R. Williams These are Facts. p. 246.

⁴⁸ M. Lax The Impact of Technology and Command on No1 Squadron Operations 1916–1958. MA (Hons) thesis, University of NSW, 1996.

⁴⁹ J. McCarthy Australia and Imperial Defence 1918 – 39. A Study in Air and Sea Power. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1976. pp. 39 – 40.

⁵⁰ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of Cabinet Meetings*. 4 Jan 1940, Minute (112) "Agendum No 8/1940 – Selection of Royal Air Force Officer as Chief of the Air Staff, and Resignation of Air Vice-Marshal S.J. Goble as Chief of the Air Staff."

⁵¹ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of Cabinet Meetings*. 4 Jan 1940, Minute (112).

⁵² As an Air Chief Marshal, Burnett was, for a few months after his arrival, the highest-ranking Defence officer in Australia.

for an extension for a second year.⁵³ He was to be paid a salary of £3,000 pa⁵⁴ (the same rate of pay as the CNS). Williams, on the other hand, was returned to Australia with the temporary rank of Air Marshal and on the same rate of pay as he received before his departure—£1,750 pa.⁵⁵

Burnett left Britain for Australia on 19 January 1940 aboard an RAAF Sunderland that flew him to Egypt. He completed the trip aboard an Imperial Airways aircraft⁵⁶ and was appointed CAS on 15 February 1940.⁵⁷

Burnett's time in Australia was, for the most part, disappointing for the RAAF and has been the subject of commentary and criticism. The general comment is that he was a strong advocate of imperial defence, with a forceful personality and considered that his main purpose was to train aircrew for the RAF under EATS. Consequently he showed little interest in the home-defence of Australia, supporting instead the view that the defence of Australia rested in the Royal Navy base at Singapore.⁵⁸ Jones was one who held such critical views and commented that because of Burnett's poor management of the RAAF, with the emphasis on EATS training "we were even less

⁵³ C.D. Coulthard-Clark The Third Brother. p. 463.

⁵⁴ NAA A705/1/163/1/296 *Conditions governing the loan of Sir Charles Burnett, Chief of Air Staff*. Minute from Secretary Dept of Defence Co-ordination to Secretary, Dept of Air, 20 Feb 1940. Burnett was to be paid an annual salary of £3,000. Of this £1,800 was to be paid into his bank account in London. The terms of his appointment also stated that if Lady Burnett remained in the UK, 3/5 of the salary was to be paid in Sterling; if she accompanied to Australia 1/5 was to be paid in Sterling. From the £3,000, Burnett was to pay for the upkeep of a house in the UK and one in Melbourne. One can only suspect that Burnett had an expensive lifestyle. On his departure for Britain at the end of his term with the RAAF he received an income tax assessment of £3,000. He laughed when he received it and said "I cannot pay". No provision had been officially made for his income tax payments and he eventually paid what he could. His total income for his term with the RAAF was £7,000. ADFA Library. John McCarthy papers, *Notes on ACM Burnett, while in Australia*. We should also recall that the Pacific War started while Burnett was CAS and the last five months of his term were at a time when Australia was under its greatest threat. One wonders how well Burnett managed the day-to-day activities of the RAAF and it is suggested that his time in office should be subject to further review.

⁵⁵ RHS *The Air Board*. Williams, on his return to Australia, was appointed Air Member for Organisation and Equipment (AMOE).

⁵⁶ NAA A705/1/163/1/296. Minute from Official Secretary, Australia House to Secretary, Dept of Air, Melbourne, 19 January 1940. Williams returned to Australia after his two-year posting with the RAF aboard the same aircraft as Burnett.

⁵⁷ Douglas Gillison Australia in the War of 1939 - 1945; Royal Australian Air Force 1939 - 1942. p. 90.

prepared for the Japanese attacks than we might have been.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless the Minister for Air and other members of the Australian Government were pleased with Burnett’s work and on 3 July 1940 the War Cabinet accepted Fairbairn’s recommendation to extend the CAS appointment for a further year.⁶⁰

Burnett served as CAS until 4 April 1942. He has been described as an RAF officer who had filled the CAS position without particular distinction for the previous two years.⁶¹ While in office he paid little heed to the formalities of the RAAF command arrangements:

He rode roughshod over the Air Board, ignoring the members’ collective responsibility and acting as though he were a Commander-in-Chief as he sought to implement the provisions of EATS as quickly and as broadly as possible.⁶²

He fell into petty wrangling all too easily and was not well respected by senior RAAF officers. During his time in office the Australian Federal Government changed from a conservative to a Labor regime and CAS had little respect for members of the incoming Government. Burnett’s appointment did not enhance the authority and prestige of CAS, and his attitude towards Labor (and especially his dealings with the Minister for Air) was the source of further differences between the Government and the Service’s high command. Burnett’s time in Australia was later termed ‘a folly’ by the British Air Staff.⁶³

There were some positive aspects, however, from his time in office as he took some initiatives that were beneficial to the Service long after he left Australia.

⁵⁸ D. Horner High Command. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1992. p. 28.

⁵⁹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 77.

⁶⁰ NAA A5954/804/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. 3 July 1940, Minute (392) “Extension of Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff”. J.V. Fairbairn died in an aircraft accident near Canberra on 13 August 1940 and A.W. Fadden succeeded him as Minister.

⁶¹ Alan Stephens Power plus Attitude. AGPS, Canberra, 1992. p. 64.

⁶² Alan Stephens The Office of the Chief of the Air Staff. p. 7.

⁶³ J. McCarthy Defence in Transition: Australian Defence and the Role of Air Power 1945 – 1954. ADFA, Canberra, 1991. p. 13.

Burnett was the driving force behind the formation of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF).⁶⁴ During the Second World War, members of the WAAAF undertook non-combat work, which in the past had been solely done by male Service members. Recruiting women expanded the Service and allowed men to be transferred to work more closely related to combat. Burnett was also responsible for the formation of the Directorate of Public Relations;⁶⁵ the Inspectorate of Air Accidents;⁶⁶ the RAAF Nursing Service; and the Directorate of Medical Services.⁶⁷ The formation of these two latter organisations meant the RAAF was no longer dependent on the Australian Army to provide all its health services. He also presided over a huge growth in the RAAF's personnel strength. At the end of Burnett's two-year posting the personnel numbers had grown from the pre-war strength of 3,489 to 79,074.⁶⁸

Jones, in the meantime, relinquished his position as Assistant CAS on 10 March 1940 and resumed his earlier appointment of Director of Training, while Bostock remained DCAS. Jones now set about the enormous task of building up a huge training network to meet the demands of EATS. Jones' achievements in this sphere were numerous and included the establishment of Initial Training Schools;

⁶⁴ J.A. Thompson The WAAAF in Wartime Australia Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic, 1992. pp. 45–46. Burnett received encouragement and support from his daughter with this initiative. M. Lax *A Short History of the RAAF* in M. Lax (ed) Air Power Presentations 1995. APSC, Canberra, 1996. p. 160.

⁶⁵ N.K. Quamby Regrettable at Best? A Reappraisal of Sir Charles Burnett's Effect on the Royal Australian Air Force 1939–1942. BA Honours thesis, Dept of History, RMC Canberra. 1985. p. 38.

⁶⁶ NAA A5954/804/2 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. 2 Oct 1940, Minute (549). "Flying Accidents in R.A.A.F." Burnett advised Cabinet he had appointed an Inspector of Air Accidents with a legal officer to assist him in the interrogation of the persons concerned and witnesses. These officers were to be independent of the Service court of inquiry constituted to inquire into all air accidents and were responsible to CAS.

⁶⁷ NAA A5954/803/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. 4 Apr 1940, Minute (229) "Organisation & Administration – R.A.A.F. Medical Service". Cabinet approved the Director-General of Medical Services (Army) relinquishing his responsibilities in the control of the Air Force Medical Service and that a standing committee, comprising the permanent directors of the three medical services be established within the Dept of Defence Co-ordination. The committee's purpose was to resolve matters that required co-ordination between the different Services.

Elementary Flying Training Schools; Air Navigation Schools; Air Observer Schools; and Bombing and Gunnery Schools, as well as the acquisition of aircraft to equip these institutions.⁶⁹

To meet the obligations of the EATS agreement, the RAAF needed to establish a training regime capable of producing 280 trainee pilots every four weeks. These men were to be trained to the advanced flying standard. There was also the requirement to train 184 air observers and Wireless/Air Gunners (WAGs) every four weeks. In addition there was a requirement for the partially trained aircrew to go to Canada for the completion of their training—80 pilot trainees, 42 observers and 72 WAGs every four weeks. Jones was also faced with the task of aircraft acquisition. At the outbreak of the war, the RAAF had 246 aircraft, placed in 13 squadrons, located at six air bases around Australia.⁷⁰ The Service would need thousands more to meet its training commitments. When EATS wound up in 1944, nine months before schedule (an event Jones likened to attempting to stop an ocean liner at full speed), Jones reported the RAAF had trained 27,387 aircrew (10,882 pilots; 6,071 navigators; and 10,434 WAGs and air gunners) in Australia. In addition 4,760 elementary trained pilots, 2,282 navigators and 3,309 WAGs were sent to Canada for final training while 674 pilots were sent to Rhodesia to complete their training.⁷¹

⁶⁸ R O'Neill *Burnett, Sir Charles Stuart* in J. Ritchie (ed) Australian Dictionary of Biography 1940 – 1980. A – DE. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1993. p. 312.

⁶⁹ Chief of the Air Staff War Report of the Chief of the Air Staff, Royal Australian Air Force; 3rd September 1939 to 31st December 1945, to the Minister for Air. RAAF Printing and Publications Unit, Melbourne, Victoria. 1946. p. 18.

⁷⁰ The RAAF was equipped with 82 Ansons; 54 Demons; seven Wirraways; 21 Seagulls and 82 training aircraft of various different types. This was nowhere enough to meet EATS demands and it was estimated the RAAF needed 666 primary trainers; 771 Avro Ansons; 414 CAC Wirraways; 423 Fairey Battles and 12 Douglas DC2s. Britain had undertaken to supply the Ansons and Battles, but the RAAF had to find ways to acquire the other aircraft. This was the start of the aircraft acquisition problem that would remain with the Service for the rest of the war and would occupy so much of Jones' time in the future.

⁷¹ War Report of the Chief of the Air Staff. p. 21.

Jones' achievements did not go unrecognised: on 21 February 1941 he was made an acting Air Commodore⁷² and later that year he was rewarded by being made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE). The citation stated that Jones, as Director of Training, had been responsible for the entire training of Australia's part in EATS. It continued "His ability, energy and determination have, to a large extent, been responsible for the successful output of trainees from all schools. Air Commodore Jones is an officer who has always shown diligence, devotion to duty and perseverance of outstanding merit."⁷³

As noted earlier, following Burnett's appointment, Bostock was retained as DCAS.⁷⁴ In this position Bostock loyally and energetically supported Burnett who, in turn, prepared the DCAS to succeed him as CAS.⁷⁵ As DCAS, Bostock was twice promoted ahead of officers who were senior to him even though this was contrary to Air Board Orders (ABO). ABO 60/1940 allowed for all promotions to be temporary initially (except for promotion to Flying Officer). The ABO was ignored, despite protests by the Air Member for Personnel (Air Commodore H.N. Wrigley), when Bostock was promoted from acting Air Commodore to Air Vice-Marshal.⁷⁶ It was alleged that Burnett pushed for Bostock's promotion to Air Vice-Marshal; arranged for him to receive the Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB); and was the first to congratulate him when the decoration was received.⁷⁷ It would be reasonable to

⁷² RAAF Discharged Personnel Section. Index Card – Officers. *Jones, Sir George*.

⁷³ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History*. *Jones, George*. Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Acting Air Commodore Jones, DFC. Citation.

⁷⁴ W.D. Bostock was promoted to Group Captain on 1 September 1938. He was appointed DCAS one year later while still a Group Captain. He was made acting Air Commodore on 1 June 1940 and promoted to Air Vice-Marshal on 1 October 1941. D. Wilson *Commander in the Shadow: Air Vice-Marshal Bostock 1942-1945*. Master of Defence Studies sub-thesis, ADFA, Canberra, 1997. p. 3.

⁷⁵ Interview with the late Air Commodore A.D. Garrison (rtd). 11 October 1995.

⁷⁶ RAAF Museum. Air Board Agenda 3984. 16 May 1942.

⁷⁷ ADFA Library. John McCarthy papers, *Notes on ACM Burnett, while in Australia*.

expect that the Menzies Government would appoint Bostock CAS after Burnett's time in Australia had finished.

A Change of Government and the Entry of Japan into the War

During the second half of 1941 the Australian Federal political scene changed in a major way. On 28 August Menzies resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Country Party leader, Arthur Fadden. Fadden's term in office was short. On 3 October during debate on the Federal budget, two independent politicians, upon whom the Government depended to hold office, changed their allegiances and voted with the Labor opposition. Fadden thus resigned on 7 October and a Labor government, led by John Curtin, took office. In addition to the Prime Ministership, Curtin took on the Defence ministry, while the War Cabinet now included A.S. Drakeford as Minister for Air, J.B. Chifley as Treasurer, and H.V. Evatt as Minister for External Affairs and Attorney General.⁷⁸ As Minister for Defence, Curtin relied heavily on the advice of the secretary of the Department of Defence, Sir Frederick Shedden.

In early December 1941, two months after Curtin became Prime Minister, the Pacific war erupted with Japanese military forces initially attacking bases in Hawaii, the Philippines, and Malaya. The Japanese then embarked on a rapid conquest of the region. The Japanese military forces' achievements included the sinking of the Royal Navy's two Singapore based capital ships and the eventual conquest of Singapore itself—thus putting paid to the Australian Government's defence plans that centred around the Royal Navy and the British navy base in Singapore—referred to as the 'Singapore Strategy.' Following these victories it was feared by the majority of Australians (including the Government) that the Australian mainland was under

⁷⁸ J. Robertson *Australia at War*. William Heineman, Melbourne, Vic, 1981. pp. 34 – 35. C. Lloyd & R. Hall *Backroom Briefings. John Curtin's War*. NLA, Canberra, 1997. p. 45.

imminent threat of Japanese invasion.⁷⁹ These events and fears brought about a radical change in Australia's defence relationships as Curtin turned to the United States for military assistance.

Even though Curtin had made a fundamental change in Australia's defence relationships from a dependence on Britain to a dependence on the US, Australia was already part of US war planning, having gained this role soon after the attack on Hawaii. On 14 December 1941, the War Plans Division of the War Department recommended to US Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall, that Australia serve as the supply base to support operations in the Philippines where US and Filipino forces under the command of General MacArthur had to be re-supplied and reinforced very quickly.⁸⁰ In early 1942 Australia became a base for US troops and materiel needed to defend the Philippines and the Netherlands East Indies (NEI—now Indonesia). Contrary to popular views the Americans did not come to provide military assistance to Australia. They came because the only way to reach the beleaguered Philippines was northward from Australia. The US and Australia were drawn together initially through a logistic system created out of necessity to counter the Japanese advances.

General Douglas MacArthur was the commanding general of US Army Forces in the Far East (USAFEF), which had its headquarters in the Philippines. By early 1942 American and Filipino forces had retreated to the Bataan peninsula after the Japanese

⁷⁹ Other works have adequately covered most of these events and defence thinking of the time. For example, the development of the Singapore strategy has been described by John McCarthy in Australia and Imperial Defence 1918 – 39, while the sinking of the Force Z ships (HMS *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*) is described in many works, including C. Shores et al Bloody Shambles Volume One. Grub Street, London, UK, 1992. pp. 108–127.

⁸⁰ E.J. Drea 'Great Patience is Needed' in War & Society. Vol. 11, No. 1, May 1993. p. 22. At the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) decided to bolster Australia for use in a future offensive against Japan. By March 1942, approximately 80,000 troops had been sent to the country, with an additional 200,000 scheduled to go later in 1942. Although MacArthur had expressed disappointment with the paltry resources at his command (and the plans to assist Britain as a higher priority), these forces, with accompanying aircraft actually represented the largest concentration of American power outside the Western hemisphere during the early stages of the war. M. Schaller Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1989. p. 62.

landing on the island of Luzon.⁸¹ On 24 February 1942, President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to leave his headquarters and proceed to Australia, where he was to reorganise the American offensive against Japan, with the primary objective being the relief of the Philippines. Travelling by PT boats and B-17 aircraft, MacArthur, his family and personal staff reached Darwin on 17 March and arrived in Melbourne four days later.⁸² Curtin had not been informed of MacArthur's arrival in the country until the commander of the Australian based US forces, Lieutenant General George H. Brett, advised him by telephone on 17 March of Roosevelt's directive appointing MacArthur to command all US Army Forces in Australia.⁸³

Roosevelt's directive suggested to the Australian Government that MacArthur should be appointed Supreme Commander of all Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific. The appointment was considered by the Australian War Cabinet, which agreed that MacArthur's leadership of the Allied forces would be an inspiration to the Australian people and all forces serving under his command.⁸⁴ The following day Curtin announced the news of MacArthur's arrival to the Australian people, who greeted it with enthusiasm.⁸⁵

The area of Allied operations in the Pacific that included Australia was designated the South West Pacific Area (SWPA), which came into being at 1400 GMT on 18 April 1942. On that same date MacArthur, by the agreement of the Governments of Australia, Britain, the Netherlands and the USA, was appointed commander-in-chief

⁸¹ By 5 January 1942, the US and Philippine forces had retreated to Bataan and MacArthur had established his HQ on the fortress island of Corregidor. The US forces at Bataan surrendered on 9 April 1942 and those on Corregidor on 6 May.

⁸² W. Manchester *American Caesar*. Arrow Books, London, UK, 1979. p. 247.

⁸³ D. McCarthy *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: South-West Pacific Area—First Year, Kokoda to Wau*. AWM, Canberra, 1962. p. 17.

⁸⁴ NAA A5954/46/808/1 War Cabinet minute 2021; 17 March 1942.

⁸⁵ The Australian Chiefs of Staff welcomed Roosevelt's suggestion, as they had, at the time of MacArthur's arrival, completed a report in which they agreed the supreme commander of the SWPA should be an American who should be located in Australia.

and established his General Headquarters (GHQ) in Melbourne.⁸⁶ The forces assigned to him were organised into five subordinate commands, largely for the purpose of operational control.⁸⁷ The ground troops were designated the Allied Land Forces and placed under the command of General Sir Thomas Blamey. Major General Julian Barnes commanded the United States Army Forces in Australia, while the United States Forces in the Philippines were under Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright. The naval elements assigned to the Allied Naval Forces were under the command of Admiral Herbert Leary. Lieutenant General George Brett commanded the Allied Air Forces (AAF), which was formed on 22 April 1942.⁸⁸ The AAF comprised USAAF tactical and service units, and was given operational control of the combat elements of the RAAF and the NEI Army Air Forces⁸⁹ and, a little later, the RAF units in the SWPA.

The USAAF's contribution to the AAF was formidable on paper but many of the aircrew and their equipment were worn out from fighting in the NEI, while other pilots were newly arrived in the SWPA and inexperienced. Of the approximately 500 aircraft in the AAF only about 200 were operational.⁹⁰

For the RAAF, being part of the AAF meant that operational control of the squadrons and necessary operational headquarters was vested in the Commander AAF. CAS remained responsible for all matters associated with RAAF personnel, procurement and maintenance of aircraft, supply and equipment, works and buildings,

⁸⁶ AWM 54 81/2/17, SWPA General Order No. 1, 18 April 1942. MacArthur moved his HQ to Brisbane a short time later, on 20 July.

⁸⁷ Reports of General MacArthur. The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific Volume 1. pp. 32-34

⁸⁸ AWM 54 81/2/17. SWPA General Order No. 1, 18 April 1942. Brett was initially the commander of US forces in Australia but relinquished this position upon the arrival of MacArthur. Brett then succeeded Major General Lewis Brereton as Commander AAF. G. Long MacArthur as Military Commander. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, NSW, 1969. p. 91.

⁸⁹ NAA M2740/1/73(1) *Higher Organisation of the RAAF. Operational and Administrative Control*. Letter from Curtin to MacArthur. 17 April 1942. When handing over the Australian units to MacArthur, Curtin stated that all orders concerning Australian forces issued by MacArthur would be considered as emanating from the Commonwealth Government.

and training.⁹¹ We should now consider how the division of the RAAF into two separate bodies came about.

The Foundations of the Divided Command

In order to make the best use of the RAAF's resources within the AAF structure and to meet the EATS commitment Drakeford worked on what was in principle a well-intentioned plan to separate the operational and administrative functions of the RAAF into two distinct bodies. In the preparation of this plan Drakeford had been greatly influenced by Langslow.⁹² On 5 March 1942, Drakeford advised Curtin:

the time has arrived for the establishment of a special Operational Command to control operations of the R.A.A.F. in the field – leaving C.A.S. to deal with Air Force policy and administration, organisation and his normal Service responsibilities.⁹³

Obviously Drakeford had come to the conclusion that managing the RAAF was too big a task for just one person.⁹⁴ Drakeford based his plan on contemporary events, namely the serious deterioration of the Allied position in the SWPA, Japanese attacks on Australian territory, and the proposed expansion of the RAAF to a 73 squadron Service. In addition, to further support the plan, he noted the influx of American forces into Australia, (which, he considered, necessitated the “closest collaboration and co-ordination” between the RAAF, the Australian Army and the US forces); the huge increase in the volume of work now devolving to Service Departments; and the

⁹⁰ R. Spector *Eagle Against the Sun*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK, 1987. p. 159.

⁹¹ NAA A5954/46/808/1. War Cabinet minute 2127; 28 April 1942.

⁹² J. McCarthy *Defence in Transition: Australian Defence and the Role of Air Power 1945 – 1954*. p. 15.

⁹³ NAA A5954/69/239/15. *Higher Direction of the RAAF. Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff, 1942*. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 5 March 1942.

⁹⁴ Interestingly Drakeford was working on his plan for a divided command at the same time as the Government appointed General T.A. Blamey as Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces (AMF), a force, in terms of personnel, that was considerably larger than the RAAF. Those responsible for the appointment obviously did not think it was too big a task for just one person. J. Grey *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume II. The Australian Army*. Oxford University Press. South Melbourne, Vic, 2001. p. 136. D. Horner *High Command*. p. 183.

rapidly increasing tempo of the War effort.⁹⁵ Drakeford expected the proposed operational command to be headed by an Air Officer Commanding (AOC), whose position would be similar to that of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Home Forces (GOC-in-C Home Forces).⁹⁶ This Australian Army appointment came about when the Australian Government, anticipating Japan's entry into the war, decided to organise some form of home defence force. Lieutenant General Sir Iven Mackay returned to Australia from the Middle East to become GOC-in-C Home Forces, with effect from 1 September 1941. Mackay's task was to command the home army—a largely militia force—designed to defend Australia. The GOC-in-C Home Forces had direct access to the Minister for Army as a commander but worked through the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) for certain administrative functions. The position was overtaken by the appointment of Blamey as C-in-C, Australian Military Forces (AMF), in March 1942 and Mackay then took over command of the Second Army.⁹⁷

Drakeford proposed the AOC Operational Command would: exercise all operational control over the RAAF; be responsible for the operations of the units under his control; furnish advice to CAS in respect of matters of inter-Service cooperation; supervise the preparation of operational plans and the execution of all preparations necessary to implement such plans; be responsible for Operational Training Units and operational training in squadrons under his control (he would report to CAS on the efficiency of such training); and be required to report on the fighting efficiency of personnel and equipment under his command. However, the RAAF's existing administration framework would remain under CAS's control.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 5 March 1942.

⁹⁶ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 5 March 1942.

⁹⁷ Correspondence received from Mr Bill Houston, Army History Unit, Campbell Park Offices, ACT. 17 May 2002.

⁹⁸ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 5 March 1942.

With this proposal Drakeford unintentionally laid the foundation for the divided command structure that plagued the RAAF for the remainder of the Second World War. In theory the proposed divided structure could have worked in the RAAF at that time, but this was before Cabinet agreed to the transfer of operational units to AAF control. The proposal would also have worked if the AOC Operational Command had been an officer with a rank lower than CAS. Unfortunately Drakeford and his colleagues did not appear to have anticipated the personality differences between senior RAAF officers and the impact this would make on the command arrangements.

While Drakeford and Langslow were planning a structure for the RAAF, Burnett was working with Brett to set up an integrated structure for the AAF, comprising RAAF and USAAF units. Under their plans, the AAF was overseen by a combined headquarters that directed operations, with Brett as Commander AAF and Bostock as his chief of staff. Australian and US officers held the senior positions within the HQ. Both Brett and Burnett were expecting Bostock to be appointed as the next RAAF CAS (and Bostock himself was under this expectation). If the combined arrangements as planned by Brett and Burnett had been allowed to continue, the senior USAAF officer would have had complete authority over all RAAF activities—not just operations.⁹⁹ This would have meant the Australian Government, in theory, would have no say in how any part of the RAAF was used. With this in mind it may be considered beneficial to Australian interests that the combined headquarters did not remain.

Brett and Burnett's plans seem to have been formulated with little consultation with the Australian Government and were contrary to the agreement Curtin made with MacArthur regarding the handover of RAAF units to the AAF. Their plans called for

⁹⁹ Alan Stephens Power Plus Attitude. p. 61.

the abolition of the Air Board, the establishment of functional commands in the RAAF¹⁰⁰ and for the heads of the various RAAF and USAAF branches (including non operational branches such as works, supply and equipment) to be under Brett's direct control, with one officer, either Australian or American, at the head of each division.¹⁰¹ This caused considerable concern for Drakeford who sought the retention by the RAAF of non-operational functions because he felt that Brett should have been free to concentrate on operations and should not have had to concern himself with support and administration matters and also because at that time approximately three quarters of the RAAF's personnel, infrastructure and assets was devoted to EATS.¹⁰² Langslow also opposed Burnett and Brett's planning and advised his Minister, "The question of handing over full control to General Brett is a matter requiring closest consideration." Langslow questioned the structure of the combined headquarters on the grounds that USAAF and RAAF organisations were entirely different. He questioned whether the RAAF should adopt USAAF organisation schemes or retain the existing scheme that was similar to the RAF. He thus advised Drakeford that the RAAF should not abandon the RAF organisation that had been in place for years and had been developed under extensive wartime experience. That organisation met local defence needs and the management of EATS.¹⁰³

Langslow pressed for the retention of RAAF administration functions because he reasoned the USAAF would only remain in Australia for as long as it took to conduct offensives against the Japanese. The Americans would then move to the next theatre of the war. It was therefore important that the RAAF did not lose control over essential functions such as supply, maintenance, and finance which would be needed

¹⁰⁰ M2740/1/73(1). Minute from Burnett to Drakeford. 20 April 1942.

¹⁰¹ M2740/1/73(1). Notes by Minister "Organisation – Air Forces in Australia." 6 April 1942.

¹⁰² M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. 8 April 1942.

¹⁰³ M2740/1/73(1). Paper titled "Review of Higher Joint Machinery" authored by M.C. Langslow.

when the USAAF departed and were also needed for EATS.¹⁰⁴ Langslow was also concerned with the integrity of the Service and feared that Australia would lose control over the RAAF if the administration functions were handed over to the AAF. By retaining the non operational functions the Australian Government was able to maintain some control over its Air Force. In providing this advice, Langslow set in train one of the major areas of grievance in the forthcoming dispute between CAS and the RAAF's operational commander.

Drakeford took up the argument with Curtin, claiming that the Burnett/Brett plan allowed for Brett to have full control over the whole RAAF, including training and admin functions. It did not appear sound to him, or Langslow, that USAAF officers with little or no knowledge of the RAAF could efficiently administer the Service.¹⁰⁵ Curtin sought advice on the matter from Blamey, Colvin and MacArthur, all of whom told him that Brett's command should not be limited to operational control. Curtin concluded that the best form of command for the RAAF was the appointment of an AOC RAAF. In the case of such an appointment he reasoned "The integrity of Government and Ministerial control of Australian Policy was fully safeguarded under these proposals." As we will see Curtin would pursue such an appointment for the remainder of the war but at this time he acceded to Drakeford's concerns:

I wish you to be aware that personal consideration of your viewpoint has influenced my decision, but it must be clearly understood that, if there are any indications that the organisation adopted is not working satisfactorily, it may be necessary to revert to the original proposals or such other changes as may be necessary.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ M2740/1/73(1). Note for Minister "Organisation – Allied Air Forces." 17 April 1942.

¹⁰⁵ M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. 20 April 1942.

¹⁰⁶ M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Curtin to Drakeford. "Air Force Organisation." 25 April 1942. Before making this decision, Curtin had gained MacArthur's advice that it was better to maintain separate organisations for each part of the RAAF and rely on co-operation rather than unified direction for the essential results.

Chief of the Air Staff

By early 1942, Curtin's government found itself having to contend with Burnett's tenure as Chief of the Air Staff ending.¹⁰⁷ The problem that confronted the Government was selecting his replacement. The Australian High Commissioner in London, Stanley Bruce, aware of the situation, in February 1942 sent a cablegram to Curtin, stating he expected the PM would be considerably preoccupied with the problem of the RAAF's senior command. He advised "it is desirable that you should have Drummond in your mind."¹⁰⁸ Drummond was Air Vice-Marshal (acting Air Marshal) Sir Peter Drummond, an Australian serving with the RAF as Deputy Air Officer Commanding in Chief, Middle East. Bruce met Drummond when the latter made a short visit to London and advised Curtin "I was most impressed with him and would feel much happier with him in Australia than most senior Air Force Officers I have contacted."¹⁰⁹ With his broad Service experience,¹¹⁰ Drummond would have been an ideal choice for appointment to a very senior position within the RAAF and the Australian Government should have moved quickly and fought hard to secure his transfer to the Service.

¹⁰⁷ As noted above, Curtin's government took office in October 1941. It would be reasonable to think that the Menzies/Fadden governments, during their time in office, would have considered Burnett's replacement. One suspects Burnett would have nominated Bostock to the Government as his successor.

¹⁰⁸ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from High Commissioner London, to Prime Minister. Personal Himself. 5 Feb 1942.

¹⁰⁹ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from High Commissioner London, to Prime Minister. Personal Himself. 5 Feb 1942.

¹¹⁰ Drummond served with 1 SQN, AFC, 111 SQN, and 145 SQN, RFC. By the end of the Great War he had reached the rank of Major, had been awarded the DSO and bar and was credited with the destruction of eight German aircraft. He remained with the RAF after the war and was sent to Australia as a Squadron Leader on exchange to the RAAF, between 1925 – 29, when he served in the position of Director of Operations and Intelligence. During the early years of the Second World War, Drummond served in several operational command positions, rising to the rank of Air Vice-Marshal. On May 1, 1941 he was appointed acting Deputy Air Officer Commanding in Chief, Middle East (this became a permanent appointment in June that year). J. McCarthy *Sir Peter Roy Maxwell Drummond* in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Vol 14. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Vic, 1996. pp 39 – 40. A.D. Garrison *Australian Fighter Aces 1914 – 1953*. p. 95.

As Drakeford had planned and argued for the structure of the RAAF, it seems reasonable that he would also have some idea who should command it. To start with, he recommended to the PM that Burnett's appointment be terminated from 16 March 1942 and Williams replace him. Once he was in the office of CAS, Williams' first task would be to examine and immediately report on the steps necessary to establish the proposed Operational Command as well as the respective responsibilities and functions of the CAS and the AOC Operational Command. Williams would have been highly suitable for the tasks Drakeford proposed. Drakeford then proposed that Drummond would be transferred from the RAF and appointed to the new position with the title AOC Operational Command of the RAAF.¹¹¹

Bruce and Drakeford were not the only people to have opinions on the appointment of CAS. Burnett too had views. Bypassing the Minister for Air (because he considered the matter to be of such urgency!), he approached Curtin with the view that his successor should be a person with wide experience in all aspects of warfare and that this experience be used to Australia's benefit. He too recommended Drummond and advised he had made informal inquiries to the Air Ministry (one assumes he also did this without Drakeford's knowledge or consent!) and had received the reply "if Australia asks for him we shall do our best to make him available when required."¹¹²

Burnett, in the meantime, continued to command the Service and was planning changes to the upper command structure, which, had they proceeded, would have led to a sideways move for Jones. CAS decided on a minor reorganisation of the Air Board, with an increase in the number of members by creating a new position of Air Member for Organisation and Works. In addition he planned some changes at RAAF

¹¹¹ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 5 March 1942.

¹¹² NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Burnett to Curtin. 5 March 1942.

headquarters. Burnett's plan was for the existing Air Member for Organisation and Equipment Branch to be retitled Air Member for Equipment & Technical Services (AMET) Branch. The AMET's functions were to be divided in two with the DE, DARM and DTS Directorates placed under acting Air Vice-Marshal W.H. Anderson while the DO, DSD and DWB were to be placed under acting Air Commodore Jones. The reason Burnett gave for the proposed change was that it would allow better control and quicker action because "with the present distribution of duties, the work cannot adequately be undertaken by one man."¹¹³ Burnett does not appear to have nominated anyone for the new Air Member position but Group Captain J.E. Hewitt was to succeed Jones as Director of Training. Hewitt's deputy was to be an RAF exchange officer, Wing Commander Freestone, who would have been promoted to Group Captain.¹¹⁴ It has been acknowledged Jones did excellent work as Director of Training¹¹⁵ so we may wonder why he was to be removed from this position. Did Burnett plan to allow Jones to broaden his knowledge and experience with the new responsibilities, or did he see Jones as being more suited to a technical position? In hindsight, the new position for Jones looks more like a 'back water' that would have removed him from the highly important task of managing EATS.

It appears CAS's plans for the Air Board reorganisation were unknown to Drakeford until he was advised of their existence by Langslow. Burnett had the tendency to act without Ministerial consent (a characteristic that Drakeford would raise with Curtin during the deliberations over the appointment of Burnett's successor) and this reorganisation was one such example of his behaviour. Drakeford

¹¹³ NAA M2740/1/259 *Dept of Air & Air Board. Minutes Corres. 1939 – 45.* Minute from Assistant Secretary (Dept of Air) to Minister for Air. 7 March 1942. Burnett began his minute to the Air Board et al with "I would like the following re-organisation to take place without delay."

¹¹⁴ NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from Assistant Secretary (Dept of Air) to Minister for Air. 7 March 1942.

opposed the reorganisation and directed Langslow, “If any instructions have been given other than those already assented to by me cancel them, and defer any further action until my return to Melbourne.”¹¹⁶ With these instructions communicated, the Minister set off to Canberra for a meeting of the War Cabinet to discuss, inter alia, the CAS appointment while Jones remained in his old job.

Cabinet Deliberations and Decisions

The War Cabinet met on 9 March 1942 and agreed not to re-appoint Burnett. Unbelievably, given the international situation and the Japanese attacks on Australia, a successor was not decided upon, although Drakeford’s proposals for the reorganisation of the RAAF must have made some impression because he was tasked with arranging an interview between Williams and Curtin.¹¹⁷ It may be recalled that in early 1940 W.H. Anderson was appointed temporary CAS, and we may ask why Cabinet was unable to appoint someone to head the RAAF, even on a temporary basis, at a time of national crisis. Perhaps an answer to this question, and many subsequent questions that may be asked about the Government’s attitude vis-a-vis the RAAF’s command situation, lay partially in the composition the Labor Government and the diverse backgrounds of the members of that Government. When Curtin and his colleagues took office, the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party was made up of people with a variety of beliefs. The majority of Ministers (including Curtin) had not been in government before and few of them had served in the Defence Services, while some were anti-conscription and unsympathetic towards the military. Few had the necessary background to deal with matters of defence, foreign policy and world

¹¹⁵ Alan Stephens & J. Isaacs *High Fliers*. p. 95. Alan Stephens *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume II. Royal Australian Air Force*. p 67.

¹¹⁶ NAA M2740/1/259. Teleprinter message to Secretary Dept of Air from Minister for Air. 7 March 1942.

¹¹⁷ NAA A5954/808/1 War Cabinet Minute (1985) 9 March 1942. *Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff*.

affairs. Curtin himself had developed a strong dislike for militarism and had been gaoled for anti-conscription activities during the Great War. Regardless of this background and unlike many of his colleagues, when he took office Curtin tried to familiarise himself with defence and foreign policy matters. He was, however, in the position of having to deal with a few ALP members (such as Eddie Ward) who not only opposed militarism but who also believed the war was part of a conspiracy to promote capitalism. Curtin, therefore, was fighting all manner of anti-war beliefs within his own party and had to move very slowly on many Defence initiatives in order to maintain the support of his colleagues.¹¹⁸ So he found himself in the difficult position of having to satisfy the widely differing factions within his own party as well as demonstrating to the Australian public that his was a credible government, which put the defence of the country as its first priority.

In keeping with the War Cabinet directive, the meeting between Williams and Curtin took place on 16 March 1942. However, it did not result in any positive action and Williams came away from it with the impression that the PM was anything but enthusiastic about him filling the CAS position again.¹¹⁹

Instead of appointing an RAAF officer as CAS in early March 1942, the War Cabinet decided to follow the precedent set by the previous Government and agreed to ask the British government if the services of an RAF officer were available (in this

¹¹⁸ D. Horner High Command. p. 137. Curtin was also aware that renegade Labor politicians (W.M. Hughes and J.A. Lyons) had, on previous occasions, left the ALP and had eventually led conservative governments. D. Day The Politics of War. Harper Collins, Pymble, NSW, 2003. p. 86.

¹¹⁹ R. Williams These are Facts. p. 295. After his comments on his meeting with Curtin, Williams added "but the Minister did not feel that way." Williams may have been aware of Drakeford's attempts to have him reappointed.

case acting Air Marshal Drummond) “on the same terms and conditions as those applying to the appointment of Sir Charles Burnett.”¹²⁰

Another decision was made at the same Cabinet meeting. It was agreed that Williams would be appointed as Inspector-General of the RAAF with the same rank and salary as CAS. In this position he would be responsible directly to the Minister and his functions would parallel those of the Army Inspector-General. Williams was an acting Air Marshal, so given this proposal, it might be reasonable to suspect that Cabinet assumed or expected the CAS, when appointed, would be an officer holding this rank permanently. The Inspector-General position never came to fruition. Curtin decided to defer this recommendation for further consideration until a reply to the request for Drummond was received from the UK.¹²¹

The Government’s attempts to secure Drummond were characterised by delays in decision-making and subsequent action. It was not until 20 March 1942 (11 days after the War Cabinet meeting when the decision was made to gain an RAF officer) that Curtin sent instructions to Bruce to begin negotiations, at the earliest possible date, with the Air Ministry for an RAF officer to fill the CAS position. Drummond was, quite clearly, the preferred officer as Curtin’s instructions included the criteria for the ideal CAS, which began with “It is essential that he should have had extensive experience in active air operations in this war, and be an Australian.”¹²² Even at this early stage in the proceedings, one cannot help question why the Australian Government spent so long in the exchange of cables with Britain over issues relative

¹²⁰ NAA A5954/808/1 War Cabinet Minute (2005) 9 March 1942. *Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff*. One wonders whether these terms and conditions initially meant a salary of £3,000 the rank of Air Chief Marshal and a one-year appointment followed by a second year.

¹²¹ We may suspect the Inspector-General proposal was to establish a sinecure through which Drakeford could ensure the continued employment of Williams.

¹²² NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Curtin to Bruce. 20 March 1942.

to the appointment of a senior air officer, given that this was a time of a great national security crisis.

Burnett, believing with the anticipated appointment of Drummond “the vexed question of my successor has been finalised,” provided an option for the employment of Williams. Williams had been sent to London as AOC Overseas Headquarters, in September 1941 to oversee the administration structure for RAAF personnel serving in Britain and the Middle East. He returned to Australia in February 1942. Burnett was not keen to have him back in the country and wrote that he considered it essential, if Williams were to remain with the RAAF, he should be employed outside Australia:

Owing to his seniority, he cannot be placed in this country, and to remain as he has been since his arrival back from the U.K. on the 22nd February. Being officially unemployed leads to gossip which is not good for the Service, and it will certainly make things difficult for both Brett and Bostock if he remains.

My Minister has given me direct orders that Williams is not to work under me at present.

I believe that the Prime Minister is anxious to place a Senior Air Staff Officer in Washington, and I consider that Air Marshal Williams could function satisfactorily in that position, as he has a knowledge of our requirements, and is energetic and hard working.¹²³

In March 1942 the British government agreed to Drummond’s transfer to the RAAF.¹²⁴ However, Drummond himself had a few reservations it would appear that he was stalling for time because he approached Burnett with some questions that were pertinent to him accepting the job, namely: would he be paid in Australian or English

¹²³ A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Burnett to Shedden. 17 April 1942. The last phrase of Burnett’s signal is written in a patronising style, as though CAS was commenting on the performance of a junior officer. One wonders what Burnett meant by the phrase “it will certainly make things difficult for Brett and Bostock if he remains.” Perhaps Burnett was aware that Williams had some influence with Drakeford and would advise the Minister adversely on the plans for the AAF. In his autobiography, Williams described his return to Australia in 1942 and noted that Drakeford had not advised Burnett of the return. R. Williams These are Facts. p. 292.

currency?; what proportion of his proposed salary was allowances not subject to income tax?; and why was it proposed to pay him at a lower rate than the Chief of Naval Staff?¹²⁵ Bruce, on 1 April 1942, advised Curtin that Drummond had expressed his deep appreciation of the offer and would accept following the clarification of some further details, viz: would he be principal advisor to the Commonwealth?; would he be a member of the local (ie Australian Government) Defence Council?; what would be his relationship with General MacArthur?; and what would be his position vis-à-vis General Brett? Bruce followed the questions with his own opinion “unless in Australia we will be using Drummond’s great experience under active war conditions in direct operational sphere, we would not be justified in pressing for his release to us in view of his value in the Middle East.”¹²⁶ In the RAAF’s divided high command arrangements, Drummond as CAS would not have been able to use his considerable operational experience. Instead he would have been placed in a position that was largely administrative in nature.

One cannot study the intricacies of the CAS appointment without speculating or imagining what may have happened, if Williams and Drummond had been appointed to the RAAF’s senior positions. We know, from his correspondence with the Air Ministry, that Williams recognised Drummond as a capable officer¹²⁷ (as did other Service and political personalities). Therefore it is likely a good professional relationship could have existed between the two. No RAAF officer had greater experience in managing the Service than Williams, while Drummond had gained considerable experience in operational command. The best outcome (apart from

¹²⁴ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 26 March 1942.

¹²⁵ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Burnett to Secretary, Dept of Defence Co-ordination. 28 March 1942.

¹²⁶ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 1 April 1942.

¹²⁷ NLA MS6525 Sir Richard Williams Papers, 1919-1967. Letter from Williams to Air Chief Marshal Sir Edward Ellington GCB, CMG, CBE. 2 December 1935.

appointing a commander-in-chief RAAF) would have been for the Australian Government to have followed Drakeford's original proposal. That is, to gain the services of Drummond and appoint him as the AOC Operational Command, then to appoint Williams as CAS. While both officers held the rank of Air Marshal (the equivalent to Lieutenant General, which was the rank of the USAAF officer who eventually held the position of Commander AAF), it is possible there would not have been personality problems between the two (at least not to the same degree as occurred between the two officers who were eventually appointed to the positions). However, political interference and inaction ensured that this almost ideal situation did not eventuate.

Burnett now took it upon himself to nominate a successor. He advised Curtin directly that his usefulness with the RAAF was finished and so he wanted to hand over command of the Service to Air Vice-Marshal Bostock. Burnett was convinced that in Bostock the Australian Government would have an officer who would safeguard Australian interests within the AAF. Burnett's opinion was that Bostock should be both CAS and AOC "to allow the discipline and organisation of the Force to function under the Act, in the same way as the U.S.A. Air Corps functions in law under their Commander."¹²⁸ It would appear that Curtin was prepared to go along with Burnett's recommendation but Drakeford told the PM he was opposed to Bostock's appointment as CAS and instead he wanted Williams to be appointed.¹²⁹

By this time Curtin had finally replied to the questions Bruce asked nearly a month earlier. He told Bruce that Drummond (as CAS) was to be the principal adviser to the Government on air power; he was to be a member of the Australian Chiefs of Staff Committee; he would have no immediate relationship with MacArthur, unless Brett

¹²⁸ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Letter from Burnett to Curtin. 17 April 1942. We may assume Bostock was aware of the contents of this letter.

died and then Drummond would replace him as head of the AAF (MacArthur had made this unlikely statement).¹³⁰ Despite Bruce's advice, Curtin did not intend for Drummond to be given any direct operational command responsibilities. On 28 April 1942, the Advisory War Council was told of the Government's decisions: Drummond was to be CAS – if his services were available; Bostock was to be Brett's chief of staff; and Williams was to be a representative of the Service Mission in Washington.¹³¹ Curtin deferred Burnett's proposal to abolish the Air Board until after Drummond had been appointed and he told Drakeford to expedite the formation of the restructured RAAF:

Now that the combat forces have been assigned to the Commander-in-Chief, I am particularly anxious that the new organisation be established with the greatest expedition. It is my direction, as Minister for Defence, that the fullest co-operation is to be afforded to the Commander of the Allied Air Forces, and this instruction is to be promulgated to all concerned.¹³²

Drakeford's reply to the directive that the fullest co-operation be extended to MacArthur was in hindsight quite ironic: "I have no doubt that it will work most efficiently."¹³³ It would appear that Curtin's directive was quickly forgotten or ignored by Drakeford and the officers at RAAF Headquarters.

Drummond's appointment to the RAAF did not happen, partially because of events on the other side of the world and partially because of the seemingly lackadaisical attitude of the Australian Government. On 28 April 1942, Bruce advised Curtin that the RAF Air Staff felt that the Middle East position had altered since the first time Drummond's appointment was raised and they expected the war in that sphere to flare

¹²⁹ NAA M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. 20 April 1942.

¹³⁰ Drummond's appointment as commander of the AAF in the event of the death or incapacity of Brett was, no doubt, a theoretical situation. It is unthinkable that MacArthur or the US Chiefs of Staff would have allowed an Australian to be in overall command of a US Army Air Force.

¹³¹ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Advisory War Council Minute. (917) Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff and Air Force Organisation. 28 April 1942. The Council does not appear to have had a contingency plan for the CAS position if Drummond was unavailable.

¹³² NAA M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Curtin to Drakeford. "Air Force Organisation." 25 April 1942.

up again. Therefore it was “preferable in the common interest that he should remain in the Middle East.” The RAF also considered it unfair to ask Air Marshal A.W. Tedder (AOC Royal Air Force Middle East) to make a change with his deputies. The Air Ministry also blocked the appointment as it considered it would have had great difficulty in replacing Drummond at that time. The Air Ministry asked Bruce to express its regret to the Australian Government.¹³⁴

Curtin was now prepared to accept the appointment of Bostock as CAS on a temporary basis. In a minute to Drakeford on 29 April, Burnett, advised “the Prime Minister has agreed that I should hand over temporarily the command of the Royal Australian Air Force to the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (A.V.M.) Bostock pending final decision of my successor. I propose, therefore, with your permission handing over on the 4th May, 1942.”¹³⁵

Curtin would not accept the Air Ministry’s refusal and he asked Bruce to make further approaches for Drummond’s transfer. These were unsuccessful and Bruce again advised Curtin that it was highly unlikely, at that time, the RAF would release Drummond for service in Australia. The Air Staff reiterated their argument for his retention with the RAF—they were not prepared to agree to the Australian Government’s request because Drummond’s role in the Middle East was vital. Furthermore, they would only release him if the RAAF CAS position would enable him to have a real influence on operations. In a subtle reminder to Curtin that the refusal had been partially of his own making, Bruce pointed out that the Air Staff had postponed all action on Drummond’s release until their questions of 1 April 1942 had been satisfied. These questions were not answered until 24 April and in the meantime the Air Staff had given no thought to selecting a replacement for Drummond in the

¹³³ NAA M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. “Air Force Organisation.” 29 April 1942.

¹³⁴ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 29 April 1942.

Middle East. We might expect that the Air Staff would have questioned the sincerity of the Australian Government's request, given the delay in providing these replies. In Bruce's opinion, the Air Ministry did not feel that Drummond's exceptional operational experience would be adequately used if he went to Australia. This opinion, together with the increasing activity in the Middle East campaign, led Bruce to advise Curtin "It seems to me difficult to contest this view and my judgement is, that much as I regret our not getting Drummond, it is not worthwhile making any further representations."¹³⁶ Curtin was therefore faced with the prospect of selecting an RAAF officer and Bostock was his most likely choice.

While the politicians were deliberating, there was some speculation among senior RAAF officers over who would be CAS, and about a week before the appointment was to be made, Jones had dinner with his close friend and mentor, Bostock. Jones commented that he expected Bostock to be appointed CAS in the next week and Jones would then have to call his friend 'sir'.¹³⁷ This was not to be the case and what actually followed had all the ingredients of a Greek tragedy.

The Selection Process

On 6 and 7 May 1942, Australian newspapers announced acting Air Commodore George Jones had been appointed CAS. This was without doubt the most

¹³⁵ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Inwards signal from CAS to Air Minister. 29 April 1942.

¹³⁶ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Bruce to Prime Minister. 2 May 1942. At this point in time there does not appear to be an alternative RAF officer under consideration by the Australian Government.

¹³⁷ Discussions with Dr Alan Stephens 5 February 2002. Up until his appointment as CAS, Jones maintained a very good friendship with Bostock and in one interview stated "He was my friend for 20 years and the moment I got the job, he expected to get the job, and the moment I got it instead of him, his attitude changed." A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled "Transcripts Jones, Garing, Bostock?" *Interview – Air Marshal Sir George Jones*. (This document is undated but data contained in other papers included in Garrison's collection suggest the interview may have occurred post February 1983.) Air Commodore F.M. Bladin, who was appointed DCAS in 1944, commented on Jones and Bostock's friendship "I remembered how these two in the early years of the R.A.A.F. had seemed to have more in common with each other than with most of the other officers at Point Cook." A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled "Bladin Memoirs." p. 33.

controversial incident in Jones' eventful life. It was also one of the most controversial administrative appointments made to the senior ranks of the RAAF.

In their autobiographies, both Jones and Williams have speculated why the appointment was made. Neither was privy to the Cabinet's decision making process. Disappointingly, Jones does not seem to have looked further into the appointment when he compiled his autobiography, even though official government records would have been available by then. Instead he bases a lot of his speculation on Williams' account, which was written 11 years before his own autobiography.¹³⁸ Therefore, when we look at both accounts we find similarities.

Williams' view of events is that he was aware Drakeford wanted him as CAS while Burnett wanted Bostock.¹³⁹ In fact there was an expectation among RAAF officers that Williams would be reappointed CAS after his posting to Coastal Command ended in 1940.¹⁴⁰ In his autobiography Williams wrote that Drakeford advised him of the proceedings at the War Cabinet meeting of 5 May 1942. Curtin, Drakeford said, had arrived at the meeting and announced he wanted to finalise the CAS appointment and Bostock would not be considered for the position. Curtin had received several representations favouring Bostock,¹⁴¹ including one from the Governor-General, Lord Gowrie. In Curtin's view the Governor-General was the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and thus was advised of the appointments of Chiefs of Staff by the Government—not the other way around.¹⁴² Consequently he

¹³⁸ G. Jones, autobiography. pp. 81 – 83.

¹³⁹ R. Williams *These are Facts*. p. 295.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland of Campbell, ACT, 12 December 1999. G. Jones autobiography. p. 81. A.D.Garrison papers. Folder *Williams Papers – Early History; WW II Events; Personal (from Pt Cook)*. Telegram from Group Captain McNamara to Air Vice-Marshal Williams, 12 September 1938.

¹⁴¹ Jones noted Bostock's supporters included Menzies and other conservative politicians. Jones papers *I Receive Appointment of Chief of Air Staff*.

¹⁴² Recently published works call into question this statement. Curtin was a good friend of Gowrie (even before the former became PM) and often called on the Governor-General for advice. D. Day

decided, “under no circumstances would he agree to Bostock’s appointment.”¹⁴³ It would appear that, in this account, Bostock was rejected not because of any lack of ability on his part, but because of Curtin’s supposed view of Gowrie’s position. This seems to be an odd reason for rejecting an officer to a senior appointment.

Drakeford advised he had no intention of recommending Bostock and then submitted Williams’ name. Curtin objected just as strongly and a heated discussion followed which resulted in Drakeford walking out and threatening to resign.¹⁴⁴ An action which, to any observer, would appear to be a highly irresponsible one for a senior Cabinet Minister to pursue at the time of Australia’s greatest national security crisis. Curtin persuaded him to return to the meeting and the discussions continued.

Drakeford, according to Williams, was in Canberra without an adviser. So when he was pressed by Cabinet to nominate another officer he chose the next person who he claimed to be on a list of personnel selected by the Americans—Air Commodore Jones. Drakeford, however, was mistaken; there had been no selection by the Americans and the list, prepared to show the structure of the combined AAF headquarters, showed Jones to be the next name after Bostock – ie Deputy Chief of Staff. It was suspected that, in view of his position on an organisation chart, Jones was mistakenly appointed CAS.¹⁴⁵

In his autobiography, Jones wrote he was told later about the discussions in Cabinet when the CAS appointment was considered.¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately he does not

The Politics of War. p. 359. D. Day John Curtin: a life. Harper Collins, Pymble, NSW, 1999. pp. 406-407.

¹⁴³ R. Williams These are Facts. p. 295. G. Jones autobiography. p. 85.

¹⁴⁴ Jones claims that Curtin’s objections may have been based, in part, on Williams’ actions at the time of Ellington’s evaluation and also because of his disagreements with Stanley Goble. He adds “Curtin may have been aware, too, that many officers had resented Williams’ long tenure as Chief of Air Staff, and regarded it as a block to their own promotion.” G. Jones autobiography. p. 82. However, one suspects there would have been ample opportunity for promotion with the rapid wartime expansion of the Service.

¹⁴⁵ R. Williams These are Facts. p. 296.

¹⁴⁶ G. Jones autobiography. p. 82.

divulge his source. Jones had also heard that Curtin would not consider Williams because of the latter's actions after Ellington's inspection of the RAAF and because of Williams' inability to maintain a harmonious working relationship with Air Vice-Marshall Goble. A defence could have been made against the latter point because Goble was, by that time, working in Canada and therefore Williams as CAS would have no day-to-day contact with him. At the War Cabinet meeting, according to Jones' informant, Drakeford nominated Williams and Curtin vetoed the nomination. Curtin was aware of Williams' reputation for political manoeuvring and had developed a distrust of him. When he asked for the next name on the list, Curtin was advised it was Bostock, to which Drakeford is claimed to have replied, "Well, I'm not having Bostock. I wouldn't even consider him." Curtin again asked for the next name on the list and was told it was Jones.¹⁴⁷

Jones' justification for his appointment was that he was made CAS because he had displayed his ability to organise, a quality required within the Service at that time and his capabilities had been demonstrated by his role with the EATS.¹⁴⁸ He believed that Bostock was not appointed because of:

The animosity he had generated between himself and many other people, more importantly, the Secretary of the Department of Air (Major Mel Langslow), and the Honourable Drakeford, Minister for Air compelled them to seek the next best choice for the Chief of Air Staff.¹⁴⁹

Jones was certain that Bostock would have been appointed CAS if Menzies or Fadden had remained as Prime Minister. Bostock, however, had been at loggerheads with Langslow for a considerable period of time over a variety of issues and he had become dissatisfied with decisions made by the Air Board (a body he referred to as a disorderly rabble). Langslow also disagreed with Bostock and Brett's initiatives

¹⁴⁷ G. Jones autobiography. pp. 82 – 83.

¹⁴⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 83.

aimed at the integration of the RAAF and USAAF and the abolition of the Air Board.¹⁵⁰

Alan Stephens has written in several works that Jones' appointment was a mistake and Cabinet selected the CAS from the wrong list of RAAF officers. Instead of consulting the RAAF List, they looked at a list of appointments to the combined AAF headquarters, prepared by Brett.¹⁵¹ On this list Bostock was shown as Chief of Staff and Jones was the Assistant Chief of Staff. There is a problem with this account also, because in late April 1942 Drakeford was given a copy of the combined AAF HQ list.¹⁵² On 28 April 1942 he advised Curtin that he agreed with the staffing proposal, with one exception—he asked for Jones' name to be removed from the list and for him to remain at RAAF Headquarters. His reasoning was that Jones, who was then Deputy Air Member for Organisation and Equipment was undertaking work that was vital to the expansion of the RAAF to a 73 squadron Service. Drakeford told Curtin “I regard it most desirable in the interests of the Service as a whole that Air

¹⁴⁹ Jones papers. *Shock Appointment of Jones as the Chief of Air Staff*.

¹⁵⁰ A.D. Garrison papers. Envelope titled “Transcripts Jones, Garing, Bostock?” *Interview – Air Marshal Sir George Jones*.

¹⁵¹ Alan Stephens *Power plus Attitude*. p. 64. Alan Stephens *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume II. The Royal Australian Air Force*. pp. 116 – 119. Dr Stephens notes that information about the selection process was provided to him by the late Air Commodore A.D. Garrison. Garrison collected a large amount of papers pertinent to RAAF history, including Jones' time as CAS. These papers are now held by the RAAF Air Power Development Centre in Tuggeranong, ACT and during December 2004 and January 2005 I had the opportunity to examine them. I found no written evidence to support the notion that there had been disagreements at the Cabinet meeting, nor that Jones' name was taken from the ‘wrong’ list. I expected that as Garrison appeared to have an interest in this subject, he would have documented his part in the events. There is, however, a paper that appears to have been typed by Garrison dealing with the RAAF command situation in 1942. When describing Jones' appointment, this paper contains the significant sentence “It has never been too clear exactly how this appointment came to be made.” In this paper the wrong list scenario is explained as an excuse “which has been presented by those close to Bostock at the time.” A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled “Aust. Mil. Leaders.”

¹⁵² NAA M2740/1/73(1). Letter from Brett to Curtin. 25 April 1942. The list showed Bostock as Chief of Staff; Jones as Deputy Chief of Staff; Hewitt as head of Intelligence; and Hancock as being in charge of Plans.

Commodore Jones' services should be retained in his present appointment where his long experience and Service background generally are proving very valuable."¹⁵³

Curtin advised Brett on 30 April 1942 that his government agreed to all the nominated RAAF officers, except Jones, to be posted to AAF HQ.¹⁵⁴ We might expect Drakeford would remember, at a Cabinet meeting seven days later, that Jones' name was not supposed to be on the AAF HQ list. One other hypothetical aspect could be considered regarding the wrong list scenario. That is, assuming Cabinet selected Jones from the wrong list because Drakeford was without an advisor, one would expect that when he returned to his office in Melbourne, Langslow would have told him of the mistake. Drakeford should then have advised Curtin of the situation and asked that Cabinet be recalled to resolve the mistake. In short, it is almost unthinkable that his own Department would not have advised Drakeford that a mistake had been made with such an important appointment.

One other theory was that Jones was appointed because he had some influence with the Labor Party. Jones himself rejected this, claiming Drakeford was a complete stranger to him at the time of his appointment. Furthermore Jones lived in the Federal electorate of Kooyong and made no secret of his political preference—he always voted for Robert Menzies, the sitting member.¹⁵⁵

Others have expressed their own reasons for Jones' appointment. Hewitt wrote, because of his hostility towards the Labor Government, Burnett had antagonised

¹⁵³ NAA A5954/1/238/4 *Higher Service Direction – Air Organisation of Allied Air Forces Australia. Administration and Control of R.A.A.F.* Minute from Drakeford to Curtin, 28 April 1942.

¹⁵⁴ NAA A5954/1/238/4. Minute from Curtin to Brett, 30 April 1942.

¹⁵⁵ Jones papers. *Shock Appointment of Jones as the Chief of Air Staff*. At the bottom of the page is a note in Jones' handwriting stating he "would not have received the appointment had it not been approved by Shedden the Secretary for defence [sic] on whom the Prime Minister depended for advice in such matters." One would expect the astute Shedden would have informed the PM of a mistake if the wrong list had been consulted. Jones remained apolitical for his tenure as CAS. He became openly involved in politics in 1952 when he sought Liberal pre-selection for the Federal seat of Flinders. Jones resigned from the Liberal Party in 1958 and joined the Australian Labor Party (ALP). He stood as the ALP candidate for the Federal seat of Henty in 1961.

Drakeford. Burnett now wanted Bostock to succeed him as CAS. However, because of his position as DCAS and his role as Burnett's advisor, Bostock was unacceptable to Drakeford. The next alternative was "to appoint the officer next on the gradation list—George Jones."¹⁵⁶ Bostock's daughter, Mrs G.J. Stewart, put another view of the appointment forward when she wrote "it was Bostock who recommended Jones' appointment as Chief of Air Staff as he thought that Jones had done an excellent job with the Empire Training Scheme [sic] and would be very suitable."¹⁵⁷

If we piece these accounts together we still only have part of the story. That is, Burnett had antagonised Drakeford sufficiently to ensure the Minister would oppose Bostock's appointment as CAS. This had a significant impact on the selection process. While it is still a matter for debate, the weight of evidence suggests the following series of events is the course that led to Jones' appointment. The reasons behind the appointment are a lot simpler than those so far presented, and it would appear that it revolved around an exchange of letters rather than an argument at a Cabinet meeting.

Upon receiving Burnett's memorandum advising he had Curtin's agreement to hand over the CAS position to Bostock on 4 May 1942, Drakeford immediately wrote a long letter to Curtin, disagreeing with the proposed command arrangements, as one might expect he should have done. One cannot help but agree with Drakeford on this matter, and we should question the attitude of a Service Chief who proposes the appointment of his successor before first consulting with, and gaining the support of, the relevant Minister. Drakeford began by telling Curtin, as he had not been informed by the PM himself, he would not accept Burnett's memorandum as a correct statement

¹⁵⁶ J.E. Hewitt *Adversity in Success*. Langate Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria. 1980. p. 28. One wonders what exactly Hewitt meant by the gradation list. Hewitt could not have meant the Air Force List because Jones was placed eighth in that document.

¹⁵⁷ G.J. Stewart *Death revives RAAF divisions* in *The Australian*. 8 September 1992.

of the new arrangements. Furthermore, if the memorandum was correct Drakeford continued:

I cannot regard it as other than a complete overriding of my authority as Minister for Air, as my letter to you of 20th inst. made it clear that I was opposed to Air Vice-Marshal Bostock accepting the position of Chief of the Air Staff.¹⁵⁸

Drakeford advised he had not in any way withdrawn his opposition to Bostock's appointment. Drakeford considered the move to be a last minute attempt by Burnett to secure Bostock's appointment without the Minister's consent. He reminded Curtin that he had not received co-operation from either Bostock or Burnett and his task, as Minister had "been made not only difficult but almost intolerable as a consequence."¹⁵⁹ Against this background it would have been extremely difficult for Drakeford to endorse Bostock's appointment as CAS.

On the practical side, Drakeford argued that Bostock would be fully occupied in his position as Chief of Staff to Brett¹⁶⁰ and would not be able to do justice to the CAS position. One assumes Drakeford would have been quite happy to have Bostock working for Brett because it meant he would have had less contact with the Minister. Therefore Drakeford returned to his earlier proposition that Williams be appointed CAS. To this he added the significant recommendation:

If you feel that that officer should be reserved for the contemplated position as Air Representative for Australia at Washington, then I recommend that Air Commodore Jones be appointed as Acting Chief of the Air Staff.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. Unfortunately this vitally important letter is undated. We may assume, however, it was drafted either on 29 or 30 April 1942.

¹⁵⁹ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin.

¹⁶⁰ Bostock was appointed Chief of Staff AAF on 2 May 1942. A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled "Command & Control. Original Docs. Bostock/RAAF CMD etc. Shedden/Cabinet papers." Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area. General Orders No. 4. 2 May 1942.

¹⁶¹ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. We may assume Jones was to act as CAS because the Government was still keen to obtain the services of an RAF officer.

The absence of a harmonious working relationship with Burnett and Bostock had made quite an impression on Drakeford and he issued Curtin with an ultimatum:

Should you feel that you are unable to accept either of my recommendations contained herein, then I ask that you will do me the favour of accepting my resignation of what I regard as a vital post within the War Cabinet. This will enable me to escape the feeling of frustration of my earnest and conscientious efforts to carry out the responsible duties which you honoured me by asking me to accept.¹⁶²

Curtin accepted Drakeford's opposition to Bostock, but he was initially reluctant to appoint either of the Minister's nominees. Instead he again cabled Bruce and asked for his advice as to whether it was worthwhile making further representations to the Air Ministry for Drummond's appointment. In this cable he advised Bruce of the position the Government faced with the RAAF CAS, indicating that he may have to support Drakeford's recommendation that Jones be appointed:

We are faced with the prospect of going well down the seniority list for a selection of one of our own officers as Brett desires Bostock as his Chief of Staff and under the organisation proposed this appointment would give him a good opportunity for operational experience.¹⁶³

Bruce's reply again was negative. Drummond was still needed in the Middle East and the Air Ministry believed that Drummond's exceptional operational experience would not be adequately used if he went to Australia. Therefore Curtin was faced with accepting one of Drakeford's nominees.

The CAS appointment was on the agenda for the War Cabinet meeting of 5 May 1942. In the relevant agenda paper Curtin advised his Cabinet:

The Minister for Air has recommended that Air Commodore G. Jones, CBE, DFC., whom Lieut.-Gen Brett recommended for appointment as his Assistant Chief of Staff, be appointed as Acting Chief of the Air Staff. As Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett desired to be relieved of his duties on 4th May, I authorised the Minister to arrange for the functions of the Chief of the Air Staff, under the new organisation to be handed over to Air Commodore Jones.

¹⁶² NAA A5954/69/239/15. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin.

¹⁶³ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Curtin to Bruce. 30 April 1942.

The recommendation of the Minister for Air that Air Commodore G. Jones be appointed Acting Chief of the Air Staff is submitted for decision, and it is recommended that the question of his pay be left to the Minister for Air, the Treasurer and myself.¹⁶⁴

The important point being made here is that if Curtin had already authorised Drakeford to hand over the CAS functions to Jones, then the decision on the CAS appointment had already been made at the Australian Government's highest level (ie by the Prime Minister) and it would only be necessary for the War Cabinet to endorse it. Therefore it is highly unlikely there were the disagreements between Curtin and Drakeford at the Cabinet meeting or that wrong lists were consulted—Jones had been nominated prior to the meeting and Cabinet's task was to endorse Jones' appointment. One must also question the likelihood of the idea raised by Ms Stewart, that Bostock recommended Jones' appointment as CAS. Given the animosity between Drakeford and Bostock, it would be quite reasonable to assume that the Minister would disregard any such recommendation made by Bostock.

There is another theory to support Jones' appointment as a deliberate decision. That is, certain factions within the ALP were keen to have men from working class backgrounds serving as officers in the Australian military forces. This was borne out two years before Jones' appointment, when F.M. Forde (a Labor member of Parliament then in opposition) asked a series of questions in Parliament, directed to the then Minister for Air, Fairbairn. Forde took Fairbairn to task over a statement, made by Burnett during his address to the annual dinner of the Old Melburnians, where the Air Chief Marshal stated "The public schools were the places to produce the 'officer class' and others who provide the brains of the fighting services."

Forde went on to remind Fairbairn that 75% of the First AIF's officers came from working class backgrounds, while of the 50 officers in the 14th Battalion from the

¹⁶⁴ NAA A5954/69/239/15. War Cabinet Agendum No 222/1942. *Appointment of Chief of the Air*

First World War, only two were ex-public school boys. Forde asked Fairbairn to give assurances that in considering officer appointments, no preferential treatment would be meted out to those from public schools but that every applicant would be considered on his merits irrespective of the school at which he was educated or the social standing of his parents. In reply, Fairbairn assured the Parliament “No preferences are shown in defence forces.”¹⁶⁵ After Labor came to power, the Government Ministers had the opportunity to promote working class men to senior positions in the military and public service if they so wished. Some of the contemporary Government Ministers were from working class backgrounds—Drakeford had been a railway locomotive driver,¹⁶⁶ as had the then Federal Treasurer, Chifley, while N.J. Makin had been a pattern maker and E.J. Ward a boiler maker’s assistant. These people would have seen Jones (who was the son of a miner and who had worked as a turner and as a motor mechanic) as “one of their own”—a member of the working class, the type of person the ALP was committed to supporting and representing at that time. We also must remember that Williams was Drakeford’s first choice for CAS. Williams too had come from a working class background—his father was a copper miner from Moonta, South Australia.¹⁶⁷ Certainly the ALP might have wanted to be seen that it supported the workers when it came to appointment to important military positions. So there can be little doubt that Bostock’s chances for appointment were brought undone by his closeness to Burnett. The RAF officer had made no effort to conceal his disdain for the working class backgrounds of Drakeford and some of his Labor comrades. Drakeford had especially taken issue with Burnett’s

Staff.

¹⁶⁵ CPD (Representatives). 15 May 1940. pp. 856 – 857. To avoid any confusion, it should be explained the term ‘Public School’ was applied to schools that existed outside the Government’s education regime. Today they are known as private schools, while public schools are those managed and financed by the Government.

practice of bypassing him or not consulting him on important organisational issues, together with Burnett's attitude of superiority and his open association with members of the opposition political party—the United Australia Party (UAP).¹⁶⁸

While we now can quite reasonably suggest the reasons for Jones' appointment, we are faced with other mysteries. Why did Drakeford tell Williams the story about the heated Cabinet meeting, the threat to resign (which, in fact, was made in his minute to Curtin), and the list of officers' names, when the selection had been made before the Cabinet meeting? Who told Jones about the proceedings at the Cabinet meeting? No answer appears to be available for these questions.

The War Cabinet met on 5 May 1942 and approved the appointment of Jones as CAS.¹⁶⁹ Curtin then advised Bruce it had been decided not to press the issue for Drummond and that Jones had been appointed CAS.¹⁷⁰

George Jones was thus appointed to the RAAF's highest position. Interestingly Jones was not consulted by the Government at any time prior to his appointment as to whether he wanted to be placed in the CAS position. There would not have been any possibility of Jones not accepting the position. He was a very patriotic man whose dedication and loyalty to his Service would not have allowed him to reject the appointment. In publicly announcing the appointment, Drakeford told the press Jones had a very fine Service record and his appointment placed at the head of the RAAF an Australian airman who possessed intimate knowledge and wide experience of the

¹⁶⁶ F. Bongiorno *Drakeford, Arthur Samuel* in J. Ritchie (ed) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Vol 14, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Vic, 1996.

¹⁶⁷ R. Williams *These are Facts*. p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ Alan Stephens *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume II. Royal Australian Air Force*. pp. 116 – 117.

¹⁶⁹ NAA A5954/808/1 Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings. Minute 2130. *Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff*. 5 May 1942.

¹⁷⁰ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Cablegram from Curtin to Bruce. 7 May 1942.

Service's organisational activities and personnel.¹⁷¹ The appointment generated comment in the print media with one newspaper editorial, speculating on the appointment and the other possible contenders, expressed surprise by stating that Jones "was the darkest of dark horses."¹⁷² Jones was never quite certain what the writer meant by the statement, but he considered it a desirable qualification for the position. The Herald, however, was critical of the appointment and one wonders whether a journalist in the paper's employ had access to the earlier phases of the Government's decision-making process. The article reporting Jones' appointment also commented the Government had failed to take advantage of the RAAF's reorganisation to secure the services, for a high level operational position, of a senior air officer with experience in air warfare in Europe or the Mediterranean theatres. Such a man, the paper concluded "could surely have been obtained from the R.A.F. if not from the Australian force and would have brought to our needs knowledge and qualifications for which there can be no substitute."¹⁷³ The paper did not name any possible officer as being suitable for a high level RAAF position, nor did they nominate anyone who would have been a preferable alternative to Jones.

With his appointment as CAS, Jones had immediately jumped ahead of seven more senior officers and was raised from a Wing Commander, temporary Group Captain, acting Air Commodore¹⁷⁴ to a substantive Air Vice-Marshal. At the age of 45, he was the youngest air commander in the Allied forces.¹⁷⁵

At the time of the decision Jones was unaware of the political processes working in his favour and expected either Williams or Bostock to be appointed. In fact he had

¹⁷¹ *New Chief of R.A.A.F.* in The Age. 7 May 1942. *New R.A.A.F. Chief Appointed* in The Argus. 7 May 1942.

¹⁷² Jones papers. *Shock Appointment of Jones as the Chief of Air Staff*.

¹⁷³ *Air Force Commands* in The Herald. 7 May 1942.

¹⁷⁴ Air Force List. February 1942.

suggested to John McEwen (the Minister for Air and Minister for Civil Aviation in the Menzies and Fadden governments—he succeeded J.V. Fairbairn in holding these ministries) that either Bostock or Williams should be appointed CAS.¹⁷⁶ Jones had become friends with McEwen when the latter was Minister for Air. Nevertheless one cannot help question the appropriateness of an acting Air Commodore giving advice to an opposition member of Parliament.

Jones was, quite naturally, caught off guard when Burnett summoned him to his office in Victoria Barracks Melbourne, and advised that he had been instructed to hand over command.¹⁷⁷ Jones found Burnett sitting at his desk with Jones' personal file in front of him and Bostock standing beside him and smiling. Burnett told Jones "I've been instructed to hand over to you." Jones was stunned by the news.¹⁷⁸ In fact probably no one was surprised more than Jones.¹⁷⁹ While he had considered the possibility of occupying the top position, he never expected it to happen so suddenly¹⁸⁰ and in the embarrassment of the situation all he could manage to say was "This sounds like treachery on my part." Both Burnett and Bostock assured him that neither of them felt that way about the appointment.¹⁸¹

Bostock's attitude in this instance is a mystery. On the surface we may think that because he was, at the time, Jones' close friend, he may have been pleased his friend had been promoted. If Bostock played the part as a mentor to Jones, he also may have been pleased that he would be in a position to provide CAS with advice and therefore

¹⁷⁵ *Youngest Air Chief, 45, to lead RAAF—Air Vice-Marshal [sic] Jones, DFC* in The Bulletin. June 1942.

¹⁷⁶ Jones papers. *Shock Appointment of Jones as the Chief of Air Staff*. Douglas Gillison Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Royal Australian Air Force 1939 – 1942. p. 477. Gillison described Jones as an able and particularly conscientious officer, although shy and reserved. It was characteristic of Jones that he had suggested Bostock be appointed CAS.

¹⁷⁷ G. Jones autobiography. pp. 81-83.

¹⁷⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 83.

¹⁷⁹ Discussions with Dr C.D. Coulthard-Clark. 29 September 1999.

¹⁸⁰ Jones papers *My experience as a Staff Officer – Director of Training, Director of Personnel Services, Assistant Chief of Air Staff*.

be in a position of a de facto Service Chief. It is also possible Bostock was smiling because he had been appointed Brett's Chief of Staff. He was quite happy going to work at the Allied Air Forces headquarters because he quite reasonably expected the operational air commander would become the most important position in the RAAF. A less important officer would then be appointed as CAS, tasked with the command of the administration, supply and training regimes.¹⁸² Bostock did not enjoy desk jobs and wanted to be at the front, with the operational arm of the Service.¹⁸³ However, he also expected to be appointed CAS. Burnett had advised him that he was to be the RAF officer's successor and he had been promoted twice, ahead of other officers, so that he would have been in a position to take over as CAS but, as noted earlier, his closeness to Burnett proved to be detrimental. Regardless of this relationship, Drakeford still had a high regard for Bostock's abilities but realised a close working relationship between himself and the Air Vice-Marshal would have been impossible.¹⁸⁴ Jones, on the other hand, later wrote that Bostock was the power behind Burnett and this caused much of the friction between Drakeford and CAS.¹⁸⁵ Bostock was also aware that Jones was at the time only acting as CAS. He must have been aware that if he distinguished himself as an operational commander and cooperated with CAS, the Air Board and the Minister, he stood a chance of being appointed CAS sometime in the future.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Jones papers. *Shock Appointment of Jones as the Chief of Air Staff*.

¹⁸² Discussions with Dr C.D. Coulthard-Clark. 29 September 1999. C.D. Coulthard-Clark *An Extraordinary Group of People: Personalities from the 1920s to the 1970s* in Alan Stephens *Australia's Air Chiefs*. APSC, Canberra, 1992. p. 40.

¹⁸³ G.J. Stewart *Death revives RAAF divisions*.

¹⁸⁴ J.E. Hewitt *Adversity in Success*. p. 203.

¹⁸⁵ AWM MSS1027 *From Private to Air Marshal*.

¹⁸⁶ In early September 1942 Bostock met with Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt. By that time the feud between the two Air Vice-Marshals was well underway. Bostock asked Hewitt for advice on how to deal with Jones. Hewitt advised Bostock to "go along with him and cooperate to the full." Hewitt expected the situation to change within two years and Bostock would "be on top of the whole R.A.A.F. situation, including Jones." Bostock admitted Hewitt was right but added "I can't do it and I won't do it." J.E. Hewitt *Adversity in Success*. p. 37.

The RAAF was in the situation of having two officers of the same rank, one in each of that Service's most important positions and each dependent on the other to undertake the duties of his position. It would be reasonable to believe two commanders could have managed the RAAF (one to head the operational arm of the Service and the other to provide all the support for that operational arm) if the two officers "got on with each other." Unfortunately this was not to be the case, as Jones stepped into the position "imbued with the way the office of CAS had operated during Williams' time"¹⁸⁷ and, following his education at the RAF Staff College at Andover, was more an officer in the RAF mould.¹⁸⁸ Thus he was determined to retain the CAS's authority, as he had known it. Because he was not consulted, nor a part of the negotiation process, Jones was unprepared for his appointment. He did not expect to be CAS at that time and thus had no vision of how he would command the RAAF. This was to be a big disadvantage for him as he spent much of his time in the position during the Second World War more in a managerial than a leadership role.

At this point it is interesting to compare the RAAF's command situation with that in place in the Australian Army, where the Government had adopted a totally different approach. General Sir Thomas Blamey was appointed commander of the Allied Land Forces in the SWPA and Commander in Chief (C-in-C) of the Australian Military Forces (AMF). Following his appointment as C-in-C, AMF, the Military Board (Army's equivalent to the Air Board) was disbanded and its members became the principal staff officers to Blamey—therefore the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) became Blamey's Chief of Staff. As C-in-C AMF, Blamey was the Australian Government's senior military advisor and was responsible for the raising, training and

¹⁸⁷ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *An Extraordinary Group of People: Personalities from the 1920s to the 1970s*. p. 40. Discussions with Dr C.D. Coulthard-Clark. 29 September 1999. One wonders whether Jones, observed the management style of the RAAF's first two CAS adopted a style more like that of Williams because he had witnessed Goble's fate.

supply of the Australian Army units under MacArthur's control. As commander of the Allied Land Forces theoretically he controlled all the combat formations of the Allied armies, regardless of whether they were Australian or American. Ideally Blamey should have been situated in only one of these positions. In practice, however, there were advantages, in that the Australian Government had one military advisor who was also the commander of all Australian troops.¹⁸⁹

These arrangements worked for the Army because of Blamey's strength and political aptitude.¹⁹⁰ They could not have worked for the RAAF because Jones was not in the same position as Blamey (ie he was not C-in-C) nor did he possess the same personal characteristics. Rather his position depended on his support from powerful political entities, such as Drakeford, who, as we shall see in the following chapters provided some assistance to Jones during his feud with Bostock.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Air Commodore Brendan O'Loughlin AO (Rtd). 14 January 2000.

¹⁸⁹ G. Long MacArthur as Military Commander. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, NSW, 1969. p. 92.

¹⁹⁰ P. Hasluck Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945; The Government and the People 1939 – 1941. AWM, Canberra, 1965. p. 441.

III

FROM CAMELS TO CAMELS

After the evacuation from Gallipoli the Light Horse units moved straight from their sea transport back to their horse lines in Egypt. The troopers happily handed in their infantry packs and were reissued with their riding equipment.¹ George Jones, was again part of a mounted Light Horse unit as the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, together with the 9th, 10th and 11th Regiments returned to their horses at the Helipolis racecourse and “mounted drill and manoeuvres shattered the solemn stillness of the desert again.”²

This stay in Egypt was to be another unpleasant time for Jones as he again suffered from health problems. First, on 8 January 1916, he found himself in No 2 Auxiliary Hospital in Heliopolis, for a week, with another bout of jaundice. The second illness was about a month later, on 28 February when he was admitted to No 1 Auxiliary Hospital in Cairo with influenza. Despite the advice sent to his mother that the influenza was “mild”,³ this turned out to be a long hospital stay. He was discharged on 12 March and sent to the Ras El Tin convalescent depot at Alexandria.⁴

The third incident of illness led to a change in Jones’ military service—because of sickness, Jones found himself within the ranks of the Imperial Camel Corps. This was not a direct transfer but came about when his Light Horse unit was ordered to the Suez Canal and left without him. At the time he was suffering from food poisoning after eating steak and eggs at an Egyptian café (a place he referred to in his memoirs as a “Gypo” joint) and was carried off again to hospital.⁵ Six weeks later he was still

¹ H.S. Gullett *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918. The A.I.F. in Sinai and Palestine*. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1984. p. 54.

² Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

³ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Form HM W 41504 from Captain J.M. Lean, Base Records Office, AIF, Melbourne to Mrs J. Jones. 9 March 1916.

⁴ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Casualty Form – Active Service.

⁵ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England*. G. Jones autobiography. p. 11.

very sick and was given the opportunity to return to Australia. He refused as a matter of principal, because he actually thought the medical people suspected he was malingering.⁶ Unfortunately there is no record on Jones' medical papers that provide us with an idea of when the food poisoning occurred. It is more likely that the Light Horse left him while he was suffering from influenza. Regardless of the nature of his illness, Jones was fit enough to be discharged from Ras El Tin on 22 March 1916. He now had to find some form of gainful employment and this quest led him to work with some of the most difficult animals he was ever to encounter.

The Imperial Camel Corps

Camels became a practical form of transport for the British Army campaigning in the Middle East during the Great War. The Army's use of this animal was not a new practice, as European armies had used camels for transport in the arid regions of that part of the world during the 19th century. In fact, at some time during that century, camel use had become popular enough for the British Army to set up its own school, at Abbassia, near Cairo, to provide instruction to soldiers in riding and handling the animals. Over the years the school fell into disuse but was reactivated in January 1916 when the British Army formed the first companies of the Imperial Camel Corps (ICC). This initiative was motivated by a decision to send a small number of companies of camel mounted troops against the Senussi tribesmen, in the western desert.⁷ Before the campaign could begin, the Army needed soldiers capable of handling camels. In order to build up numbers of appropriately trained personnel

⁶ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁷ On 14 November 1915 the Senussi tribesmen in Italian Libya rose up in a revolt against the Allies. The Senussi were supported by the Turks and British troops were sent to fight them, but the tribesmen, using the desert as their hiding place continued as a cause of aggravation to the Allies. The revolt, which continued into the following year, was a cunning piece of Turkish planning as it tied down 30,000 allied troops (and the materiel necessary to support them), who could have been deployed to another part of the campaign. M. Gilbert *First World War*. Harper Collins, London, UK, 1995. p. 210 and 236.

in the newly formed Corps, four companies of troops from the 1st and 2nd Australian Infantry Divisions were sent to the Abbassia school.⁸

H.S. Gullett notes that most Australian troops in the Middle East were keen to proceed to the fighting in France and were reluctant to do anything that would impede their chance to fulfil this desire, including joining the Imperial Camel Corps. To overcome the shortage of volunteers, battalion commanders found a way of selecting personnel for the Corps, by discarding, “a number whose association with the infantry was not looked upon as satisfactory,” from the ranks of their own units. Thus the soldiers assigned to the camel units usually lacked enthusiasm. To add to their unhappy situation, they found the camels to be strange, difficult and sometimes dangerous animal to manage.⁹

Unlike some of the other personnel, Jones was neither ‘press ganged’ nor coerced into the Camel Corps. He volunteered at a time when service with the unit seemed to be a better option than his present posting. Having become separated from the Light Horse, he was sent to a ‘details’ camp at Tel-el Kebir on 18 April 1916.¹⁰ It was an inhospitable site, located in the desert between Cairo and the Suez Canal and was subject to all manner of climatic extremes. It was unbearably hot during the day, freezing cold at night (Jones and his fellow soldiers slept in the open and frost formed on their blankets) and subject to dust storms. Boredom was a real problem and to overcome it Jones started to attend an NCO training course.¹¹ After three months, he was heartily sick of the place and when he had a chance to move to the Camel Corps

⁸ H.S. Gullett The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918. The A.I.F. in Sinai and Palestine, p. 211.

⁹ H.S. Gullett The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918. The A.I.F. in Sinai and Palestine, p. 212.

¹⁰ NAA *World War I Personnel Records—George Jones*. Casualty Form – Active Service.

¹¹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 11.

he grasped it.¹² Jones joined his new unit on 15 July 1916 and ten days later he was sent to Abbassia for training with 13 Squadron, ICC.¹³

Jones was one of the many soldiers who found the camel a difficult beast to manage. His personal mount was a particularly ugly animal, which was forever attacking him, “from either end.” Finally the camel succeeded in publicly embarrassing him while 13 Squadron was on parade. The camel threw Jones and left the parade at full gallop, with Jones still hanging on to the reins and bouncing off the parade ground’s surface at every fourth step.¹⁴ Never the less, his camel handling abilities must have made an impression because within two months of joining the ICC he was made a temporary Corporal.¹⁵

Jones Joins the AFC

A chance meeting with an old friend gave Jones an opportunity to bid farewell to his vicious camel and opened up an entirely new method of war fighting to him. While at Abbassia, Jones met, ‘Nugget’ Balfour in a canteen.¹⁶ Balfour used to visit Samuel Jones’ motor repair shop in Fitzroy before the war and he and George had become friends. Now Balfour himself was working as a mechanic, with 1 SQN, Australian

¹² Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

¹³ NAA *World War I Personnel Records—George Jones*. Casualty Form – Active Service.

¹⁴ Jones papers. Audio tape *Sir George Jones, Funeral Service*. Transcribed by Peter Helson on 6 May 2002.

¹⁵ NAA *World War I Personnel Records—George Jones*. Casualty Form – Active Service.

¹⁶ 1st Class Air Mechanic (1/AM) Albert “Nugget” Balfour enlisted on 17 August 1915 and joined 1 SQN AFC with the original contingent in January 1916. He was wounded in the leg by sniper fire at a Bedouin village near Mejdal, Palestine in December 1917 but survived the war and returned to Australia in March 1919. M. Lax *One Airman’s War*. Banner Books, Maryborough, Qld, 1997. p. 89 & 163.

Flying Corps (AFC).¹⁷ During the unexpected reunion Balfour asked Jones “Why don’t you get into the Australian Flying Corps, like me?”¹⁸

The conversation with Balfour was to be a turning point in George Jones’ life. His interest in aviation was sufficiently aroused so that when, a few months later, invitations to apply to join the AFC were published in Routine Orders, he immediately applied. His application was forwarded through the CO ICC, Colonel N.M. Smith VC. After receiving the application, Smith conducted an informal trade test to gauge Jones’ mechanical ability. He asked Jones’ advice on problems he was experiencing with his car. Jones provided answers, hoping that he succeeded in convincing the Colonel he knew as much about motor vehicles as he did about camels.¹⁹ Not unsurprisingly Jones’ knowledge of motor vehicles was greater than his knowledge of camels and Smith approved the application. Jones’ decision raised questions among his Camel Corps colleagues, who queried the transfer accompanied by the loss of a Corporal’s rank and pay to return to a rank level with a Private. Jones, however, did not find anything especially exalting about being a Corporal.²⁰ We can look at Jones’ decision more logically than a just a desire to change Corps. It seems reasonable that, as a motor mechanic with a considerable interest in machinery and internal combustion engines, he would be attracted to the AFC as it was a Corps that predominately depended on technology and mechanisation to carry out its business. He had spent several years working with engines and, as such, was the type of person that the embryonic air forces world-wide were recruiting into their ranks.

¹⁷ 1 SQN AFC left Melbourne in March 1916 for Service in the Middle East. On their arrival in Egypt in April, the Squadron was placed under the command of the British who re-numbered it 67 SQN. The Australians who continued to refer to themselves as 1 SQN in all but official paperwork resented this move. As a partial compromise the unit was referred to as No 67 (Australian) Squadron for most of 1917 and early 1918. Finally the unit was officially renumbered 1 SQN AFC on February 6, 1918. M. Lax *One Airman’s War*. p.10.

¹⁸ M. Ryan *The bush kid who reached for the sky* in *Sunday Press*. 20 January 1985. p. 21.

¹⁹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

²⁰ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

Working with aircraft and aircraft engines would expand his knowledge and expertise and would benefit him when it came to post-War employment. There is also another issue to consider. As a Light Horse trooper, Jones had seen land warfare close up at Gallipoli and it had no appeal to him. There was none of the glamour that he and his fellow troopers were looking forward to before they left Melbourne. Instead he had witnessed the unproductive trench warfare stalemate at Gallipoli; the discomfort of living in a trench; climatic extremes; having his body continually bitten by lice; and the trauma of close-up death, which would trouble him for the rest of his life. He may well have had the idea that service with the AFC, on airfields away from the front lines, would remove him from the horror and grief of land warfare but would still allow him to contribute to the war effort, using his natural and acquired skills and abilities to their best value. In all, Jones made a sensible decision.

Regardless of the opinions of his comrades Jones transferred from the Camel Corps to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) – Australian Wing, on 28 October 1916.²¹ His first posting was the following day when he was attached to 67 (Australian) SQN to undertake a trade test. 67 SQN, at that time was commanded by Major T.F. Rutledge RFC²² and was based at Kantara—a town alongside the Suez Canal. Jones' capabilities and skills were demonstrated in the trade test and in early December he was posted to 67 (Australian) SQN RFC, as a 2nd Class Air Mechanic (2/AM), paid at the rate of 8/- per diem.²³ In the Squadron he undertook maintenance work on BE 2 and Martinsyde aircraft.²⁴

²¹ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force – Attestation Papers of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. p. 4. Statement of Service. On that same day Jones was struck off strength with the ICC and reverted to his permanent rank of Trooper.

²² M. Lax *One Airman's War*. p. 49. Captain Richard Williams was at this time commander of 'C' Flight, 1 SQN. Rutledge was posted back to the UK on 22 May 1917 and Williams was promoted to Major and appointed CO.

²³ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Casualty Form – Active Service.

²⁴ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England*.

It was during his short time with 67 (Australian) SQN that Jones first met Richard Williams. The latter was an officer with a somewhat puritanical disposition—he “took his profession very seriously, he was a non-drinker, non-smoker and non-swearer.”²⁵ Jones’ use of profane language while working on an aircraft did not mark an auspicious beginning to their acquaintance:

I was helping to install an engine in a BE 2e, and working at night by electric light. For some time sandflies had been getting in my eyes, and I finally called them ‘bloody bastards’. I had no idea there was an audience. Williams, standing close by, reprimanded me so severely it seemed I would be expelled from the Flying Corps. He was at that time much more narrow in his views than he later became, but I heard on good authority he was thinking hard whether it would not be a good thing to get rid of me.²⁶

Shortly after Jones was transferred to another unit—68 SQN (later to become 2 SQN, AFC). He suspected the sand flies incident, “led to my transfer to No2; he [Williams] probably didn’t want my kind in his squadron.”²⁷

Jones’ new unit was the second Australian RFC squadron and it was formed at Kantara, Egypt on 20 September 1916. The majority of its personnel were drawn from Australian units in the region—67 SQN and the AIF’s Light Horse Regiments, and a few others were sent from Melbourne. The Squadron’s CO was Captain (later Major) Oswald ‘Toby’ Watt, who, at this point in time, was the most experienced Australian combat pilot, having flown with the French Service d’Aviation Militaire since the outbreak of the War.²⁸ When the Squadron was formed it was without pilots

²⁵ R. Hunt *Australian Air Aces*. Horwitz Publications, Sydney, NSW. 1962. p. 65. D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal*. p. 99.

²⁶ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*. One wonders, however, how Williams expected a young motor mechanic from ‘the bush’ to speak when he was being harassed by insects.

²⁷ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli’s trenches to CAS in Contact*. Vol 42, No1, 1987. p. 4.

²⁸ J. Bennett *Highest Traditions*. AGPS, Canberra, 1995. pp. 10-12. Watt had previously commanded ‘B’ Flight of 67 SQN.

or observers and was sent from Kantara to the UK for training. The aircrew were selected from Squadron personnel during the training process.²⁹

On Saturday 13 January 1917, 68 SQN embarked from Alexandria aboard a cattle ship, the KINGSTONIAN, which formed part of a convoy destined for Marseilles, France. Accommodation on the voyage was very uncomfortable, as Squadron personnel slept in the ship's cattle stalls. The first leg of the voyage, between Egypt and Malta was not without incident as two ships in the convoy were torpedoed.³⁰ The ship docked in Valetta Harbour, where personnel were allowed ashore and Jones and his colleagues were taken on a tour of the Island's historical sites, including the 800 year old subterranean grain stores built by the crusaders.³¹ Things were different when the ship reached Marseilles and shore visits were not permitted. Jones and some of the more adventurous Squadron members climbed down a rope over the stern and went into the city. Unimpressed with Marseilles, Jones returned to the ship. When challenged by a guard on the gangway, he said that he had gone down to retrieve his hat which had fallen overboard.³² As it turned out, this was to be costly adventure, as his statement of service records the crime of Absent Without Leave in Marseilles on 25 January 1917.³³ Jones commented that most personnel managed to return to the ship without being missed but, "the next morning on parade when asked if we had been ashore, some of us were silly enough to admit it."³⁴ Watt fined him and his adventurous colleagues 28 days pay.³⁵ Quite naturally, Jones and the others

²⁹ R. Williams These are Facts. AWM, Canberra. 1977. p. 54.

³⁰ J. Bennett Highest Traditions. p. 16.

³¹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

³² G. Jones autobiography. pp. 12-13.

³³ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force – Attestation Papers of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. p. 4. Statement of Service and Casualty Form-Active Service. p. 3.

³⁴ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

³⁵ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force – Attestation Papers of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. p. 4. Statement of Service. The recalcitrant

felt that the punishment was too severe. The following day, Squadron personnel officially disembarked at Marseilles and then departed on a miserable three day rail trip across France during the middle of winter, 1916-1917—one of the coldest on record. The Australians, straight from the desert, were completely unprepared for such cold. They had not been issued with overcoats and some were still dressed in the shorts and shirts that had been their daily outfit at Katana. They traveled in unheated railway box cars without windows and with straw on the floors to sleep on. It was a horrible journey, with little to eat or drink, as the food and water provided for the airmen had frozen solid. For Jones, a high point of the trip “came when the train stopped in a viaduct. On the road below, a French woman with a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread in a basket was persuaded to sell us the lot. We hauled the basket up with a rope, or boot laces joined together.”³⁶ Regardless of this small refreshment, the inclement weather continued. John Bennett, quoting a Squadron member, writes that the night of 27-28 January 1917 was the coldest for 80 years and two British Army soldiers, accompanying the Australian unit, froze to death while on sentry duty.³⁷

Things were not much better at the end of the rail journey. At the port of Le Havre, Squadron personnel received their first hot meal since arriving in France and were billeted in tents, which offered little protection against the freezing conditions. From Le Havre they embarked aboard a steam ferry, the *DONEGAL*, bound for Southampton and Jones wasted no time in climbing down into the engine room to sleep beside the boilers for warmth.³⁸ In Southampton harbour chunks of ice floated past the *DONEGAL*.³⁹ In all, the trip from Marseilles to the UK took five days and

personnel must have been grateful when the fine was reduced to 14 days pay after the Squadron reached the UK. G Jones autobiography. p. 13.

³⁶ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

³⁷ J. Bennett *Highest Traditions*. p. 16.

³⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 13.

³⁹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

the AFC personnel disembarked at Southampton on 30 January 1917. Their arrival was part of the establishment of dedicated Australian flying units in the European theatre of the war.

Nos 68, 69 and 71 (Australian) SQNs RFC all arrived in the UK during the winter of 1916-1917. They were all untrained, unequipped and incompletely formed at the time of their arrival. However, all three units soon were strengthened by the attachment, from 67 SQN, of experienced air and ground crew.⁴⁰

Of the Australian units, 68 and 71 SQNs were designated as fighter squadrons while 69 SQN was formed for aerial reconnaissance. The units were then separated from each other and 68 SQN was based at Harlaxton, 3km south west of Grantham in Lincolnshire.⁴¹ The Australians shared this airfield with 44 (Reserve) SQN, RFC. Both units were part of the 25th Training Wing, which had its headquarters at the nearby town of Spittlegate.⁴² Their training for combat now began.

Flying Training

The training regime for the three Australian units was similar. It lasted for eight months and was conducted to familiarise air and ground crew with each aircraft type they would find themselves flying or maintaining in France.

68 SQN began training for its role as a combat unit serving at the front. What this entailed was that those personnel selected to become pilots were taught to fly while for the ground crew it meant adapting their technical expertise, usually gained before their Army service, to the world of aviation.⁴³

⁴⁰ F.M. Cutlack The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918; The Australian Flying Corps. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland. 1984. p. 175.

⁴¹ J. Rawlings Fighter Squadrons of the RAF and Their Aircraft. Crecy Books, Cornwell, UK. 1993. p. 170.

⁴² J. Bennett Highest Traditions. p. 17.

⁴³ J. Bennett Highest Traditions. p. 19.

By 1917 the RFC's training had become quite specialised. Gone was the practice, common during the early days of the War, of sending aircrew to France and expecting them to pick up combat techniques while flying over the front lines. Instead, squadron personnel learned about the construction of their machine guns (Vickers and Lewis .303); shooting from the air; compass navigation; aerial observation; aerial photography; and artillery spotting. In addition, aircrew received lectures from experienced pilots on a regular basis on contemporary conditions on the Western Front and on the latest trends in air combat.⁴⁴

George Jones traveled with other Squadron personnel to Harlaxton by train. Compared to the French rail journey, this trip was pure luxury, even in third class rail carriages.⁴⁵

During its time in training, 2 SQN flew Horace Farman biplanes and, as a 2/AM, Jones was placed in charge of the Gnome engine of one of these aircraft.⁴⁶ His mechanical skills were quickly recognised and instead of looking after just one engine, Jones was put in charge of a workshop truck and given the job of manufacturing small parts for the Squadron's Farman's Gnome engines.⁴⁷ By the beginning of April 1917 he had been promoted to 1/AM.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ F.M. Cutlack The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918; The Australian Flying Corps. pp. 175-6.

⁴⁵ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁴⁶ The Horace Farman was an aircraft design that was the result of a collaboration of the two Farman brothers Henry and Maurice. In 1915 the brothers (both established aircraft constructors) pooled their efforts and built an aircraft type that used the best aspects of their existing types. K. Isaacs Military Aircraft of Australia 1909 – 1918. AWM, Canberra, 1971. p. 25.

⁴⁷ G Jones autobiography. p. 13. S. Brogden *Air Marshal Sir George Jones: The Early Years* in *Aircraft* October 1984. p. 40. NLA audio tape TRC 425/2 SIR GEORGE JONES. Interviewed by Fred Morton, c1975. Transcribed by Peter Helson, December 2001.

⁴⁸ NAA *World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Australian Imperial Force – Attestation Papers of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad. p. 4. Statement of Service. Date of promotion is shown as April 1, 1917.

It was not all work for George Jones at Harlaxton. While there he made friends with an airman from Brisbane, Ray Bould and the two of them spent a lot of their spare time together:

We spent all our time in Nottingham, cycling the twenty miles from Grantham, often meeting two girls we were friendly with. Occasionally we went to London, which I thought was the most glamorous place in the world. On those occasions we stayed in comfortable huts at Aldwych, in the Strand, near where Australia House now stands.⁴⁹

The life of an air mechanic was not enough for Jones. He said in a newspaper interview in the mid 1980s “When I saw other ground crew applying for pilot training, I applied too.”⁵⁰ Perhaps this is an oversimplification of contemporary events. In his autobiography he writes that he thought a great deal about pilot training and even then submitted his application at the very last moment. Jones was certainly clever enough when it came to mechanical engineering and he enjoyed his time away from work but it would appear, however, in this instance he was a little shy when it came to promoting his own abilities. Major Watt questioned Jones as to why he had not applied earlier. Jones, mindful of the fact that pilots were automatically commissioned as officers and perhaps aware of the associated social and class implications, confessed, “I understood one had to be recommended by at least a Colonel, in order to stand a chance.”⁵¹ Watt, unimpressed with Jones’ answer, replied:

“Do you know what I do with such applications?” He pointed to his wastepaper basket, “I put them in there,” he said.⁵²

⁴⁹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁵⁰ M. Ryan *The bush kid who reached for the sky*. p. 21.

⁵¹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁵² Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*. G Jones autobiography. p. 14.

Jones' application was successful⁵³ and on 6 July 1917 he marched out of 2 SQN to the Staff Officer for Aviation in London. Now he became part of an established regime for AFC trainee pilots, whereby after passing medical examinations, they were sent on a six week course at either No1 School of Military Aeronautics at Reading, or No2 School of Military Aeronautics at Oxford. Jones was sent to the latter, where as part of the training regime at Queens College, he attended lectures on the theory of flight; aerial navigation; aero engines and aircraft construction. He also undertook practical subjects, which included aircraft engines; rigging; Morse code (Jones was able to receive and send ten words per minute⁵⁴); artillery; spotting; bombing; compass and map reading.⁵⁵ Aircrew trainees also received few lessons in fighter tactics, such as the methods of approach, and attack on two seater and single seat aircraft. Despite the effort expended on this training, Jones found that in combat conditions, the instruction given in England was not always correct, particularly the instruction on how to attack German two seaters, which was proved to be entirely wrong. In the case of the two seat aircraft, the students were told to attack from under the tail section.⁵⁶ As we shall see, when Jones tried that approach in combat it was very unsuccessful to the extent he received return fire from the German gunner. Perhaps the German air corps was well aware of the RFC's combat tactics and was also providing instructions based on experience to its pilots.

⁵³ Jones' success with his application may relate to the high rate of attrition the Allies were experiencing with aircrew at the time. During the Great War the RFC lost 9,378 aircrew, a figure which may seem insignificant when compared with the losses experienced in land combat. When we consider, however, the newness of the Service and the small numbers of personnel involved in combat, this number is as horrific as the losses on the Western Front. At a unit level, some squadrons casualty rates reached 98% for an extended period, while the average for all squadrons during the War was 50%. The life expectancy for a new pilot flying operations over the Western Front was three weeks. M. Hayes *Angry Skies*. ABC, Sydney, NSW, 2003. p. 84. Even as late as October 1918, Jones (then a Flight Commander) lost five pilots from his flight in one week.

⁵⁴ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George*. Australian Air Force. Application for a Commission as Flying Officer (Pilot).

⁵⁵ F.M. Cutlack *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918; The Australian Flying Corps*. p. 430.

⁵⁶ NLA audio tape TRC 425/2 SIR GEORGE JONES.

By 1917, in order to gain his wings, a student pilot needed to have accumulated 20 hours solo flying, to have undertaken a landing without power from 8,000 feet and to have qualified in bombing and aerial photography tests, as well as the required technical subjects.⁵⁷ In addition, there was another side to a pilot's life. Jones was to become accustomed to, "various other subjects essential for an air force officer."⁵⁸ "I learned to play tennis and to go punting on the river and generally to live like a gentleman."⁵⁹ "Learning to behave like a 'gentleman' was a totally new way of life for me."⁶⁰ No doubt the boy from rural Victoria enjoyed the new life style. From now on, when he visited London he was able to stay at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall instead of the huts in the Strand.⁶¹

On 31 August 1917, three months after leaving Harlaxton, Jones commenced flying training at the RFC base at Tadcaster in Yorkshire. His first flight was in an American built Curtis JN-4 Jenny with the serial number B1917. He was accompanied on the ten minute flight by an RFC officer, Captain C. Woolvern.⁶² His only comment on the flight was that it involved two landings.⁶³

During September Jones continued his flying training and ran up five flights in the Curtis—accumulating one hour and five minutes flying time.⁶⁴ Towards the end of the month he flew a deHavilland DH 6 and in the relatively short time of six days had one hour and 35 minutes flying time on the type. George Jones seems to have had

⁵⁷ D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal* in *Over the Front*. p. 99.

⁵⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 14. Another officer on the same training course was Lieutenant E.J. Pflaum who made further appearances in George Jones' life.

⁵⁹ Jones papers. Audio tape of *The Today Show*. Mike Hamilton reporter. Transcribed by Peter Helson. 11 December 2000.

⁶⁰ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli's trenches to CAS* in *Contact*. p. 4.

⁶¹ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁶² D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal*. p. 99.

⁶³ G. Jones autobiography. p. 14.

⁶⁴ G. Jones autobiography. p. 14. On each flight in the Jenny another officer accompanied him. Jones added that his first five flights were recorded as right hand circuits, followed by two left and then another eleven to the right.

some natural skills when it came to flying as he flew his first solo flight with only 110 minutes of dual flying—the average time for most pilots was four hours.⁶⁵

Jones made his first solo flights in a DH 6 and his confidence as a pilot increased. On one of these early flights he writes that he attempted some ‘mild aerobatics’. The flying instructor was unimpressed and told him, “You’re lucky you didn’t kill yourself.”⁶⁶ All told, Jones ran up two hours and ten minutes on the DH 6⁶⁷ and by the time he left Tadcaster on 30 September 1917, he claimed total flying time of five hours and five minutes (including two hours and ten minutes solo). While there he made thirteen solo landings and on two occasions flew as high as 1,200 feet.⁶⁸

His next posting was 24 days with 61 SQN, which was based at South Carlton, near Lincoln. Flying training was conducted there with Royal Aircraft Factory BE 2e and RE 8 aircraft.⁶⁹ Operational squadrons on the Western Front at this time used both these types, so the training for some pilots was a bit more realistic. The RE 8 was, as the prefix implies, a reconnaissance aircraft, while the primary role of the BE 2e was that of a two seat observation and photo reconnaissance aircraft with a secondary role of day and night bomber. The examples used at South Carlton had been fitted with dual controls and were used as trainers.⁷⁰ Jones found both types easy to fly⁷¹ and while at South Carlton gained 20 hours flying time on the BE 2e and five hours on the RE 8.⁷²

⁶⁵ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli’s trenches to CAS in Contact.* p. 4.

⁶⁶ G. Jones autobiography. p. 15.

⁶⁷ *NAA World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones.* Officers Record Form. p. 2.

⁶⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 15.

⁶⁹ BE initially stood for Bleriot Experimental as the French aviator Louis Bleriot was credited with the development of a tractor type aircraft (ie the aircraft with the engine and airscrew at the front, pulling the aircraft through the air). The abbreviation was later taken to mean British Experimental. RE stood for Reconnaissance Experimental. C.G. Grey *Janes All the World’s Aircraft 1919*. Reprinted by David & Charles (Publishers) Ltd, Newton Abbot, UK, 1969. p. 35a.

⁷⁰ P. Cooksley *BE 2 in Action*. Squadron/Signal Publications, Carrollton, TX, 1992. p. 33

⁷¹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 15.

⁷² DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History. Jones, George.* Australian Air Force. Application for a Commission as Flying Officer (Pilot). This form records George Jones accumulated the following flying time on different aircraft types: DH 6 – 2 hours 10 minutes; BE – 20 hours; RE 8 –

Flying from this base seems to have been more directed towards combat operations, as Jones writes that he flew solo photographic and bombing training sorties. He notes the fact that while these were training flights, exciting things happened:

I went up to 6,000 feet early one morning, and after a while a cloud drifted over the aerodrome below. So I gauged my position and dived down through a cloud to suffer a horrible shock. A paddock was coming straight up to hit me. I got the plane up again and flew round Lincoln for an hour or so trying to find the aerodrome. In one moment of panic I saw the spire of the Lincoln cathedral flash past my wingtip. Finally, I got down at Waddington aerodrome, just south of Lincoln, my first horrifying experience of being caught in a fog.⁷³

Nevertheless, Jones must have felt some pride when he left 61 SQN with five hours dual and 24 hours solo flying recorded in his log book.

George Jones then found himself back in the company of his fellow countrymen, with 71 SQN at Castle Bromwich near Birmingham. He marched into this unit on 25 October 1917.⁷⁴ The Squadron was training pilots to fly Avro 504Ks, Sopwith Pups and Camels. Jones was attached to an Australian instructor named Geere who was, “a very old identity in the Australian Flying Corps.” He had joined 71 SQN before it left Australia. When the Squadron was eventually sent to France, he did not accompany it because, “He got into some bother about some engine parts that he came by, not quite legally.”⁷⁵ During their flights together Geere would not allow Jones to use the highly balanced and very sensitive rudder on the Avro 504K. Therefore, without experience in the use of this control, Jones’ first solo flight in an Avro (serial number B3178) was

5 hours; Avro – 3 hours; Sopwith Scout – 2 hours; Bristol Scout – 2 ½ hours and the Sopwith Camel 22 hours.

⁷³ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁷⁴ *NAA World War 1 Personnel Records—George Jones*. Record of Officers’ Services.

⁷⁵ NLA Audio Tape TRC 425/2 SIR GEORGE JONES. It seems that Jones has given this person an incorrect name. The identity of Geere is a bit of a mystery as the Nominal Roll at <http://www.awm.gov.au/database/awm8/name.asp?surname=geere> shows the only person with that name to have served in the AFC is Lieutenant Arthur Edward Geere, who was with 1 SQN AFC in

not without incident. When Geere sent Jones up for a 25 minute flight, the student, unfamiliar with the rudder, was disoriented by the aircraft's zig-zag take off.⁷⁶ Jones, "became somewhat flustered, and at about 100 feet, accidentally pressed the thumb switch on the top of the control lever."⁷⁷ The rotary engine died because the switch was the magneto cut out. The engine came back to life when Jones released the switch. He quickly recovered the situation and youthful exuberance took over. He completed the flight successfully and finished it off with a few good loops before landing. Geere's only comment was, "Well my boy, you've got more guts than skill."⁷⁸

Unfortunately this was not to be Jones' final training incident. At the fighter training school at Ternhill in Shropshire he was ordered to perform a loop in a Camel, even though he had not received instruction in this particular manoeuvre on that aircraft type. This was a difficult manoeuvre for an experienced pilot to perform in a Camel. As a result of his inexperience Jones handled the controls too violently and tore the king post off an aileron while making a bad landing. (The king post carried the wires, which controlled the aileron and with it missing the aileron was unusable.) Rightly or wrongly the instructor blamed him for the damage:⁷⁹

My instructor accused me of causing the damage through the landing, which I thought very unfair. He had given me no instruction on how to loop this particular aeroplane, which required the application of hard left rudder before reaching the top of the loop. This looping of a plane is no mere stunt: it's an integral part of fighter training.⁸⁰

In preparation for operational flying, Jones accrued somewhere between 20 and 30 hours in Sopwith Camels prior to being posted to a unit in France. He considered the

1916. It is highly unlikely that this is the same person who Jones describes as someone who had been with 71 SQN before it left Australia.

⁷⁶ D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal*. p. 100.

⁷⁷ Jones papers. *War Experiences from 1915 to 1918*.

⁷⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 16. Jones papers. *War Experiences from 1915 to 1918*. D. Martin *The Apprentice Air Marshal*. p.100.

Camel to be a tricky but delightful aircraft to fly. He found that while it was not very fast (top speed of c115 mph) it was very manoeuvrable. One problem Jones encountered with the aircraft was because of the gyroscopic action (due to the rotation of the engine) it was necessary to conduct a right hand turn by giving the aircraft slight right rudder at the start but then, the moment the turn commenced, he had to switch over to left rudder in order to keep the nose from dropping and putting the aircraft into a spinning nose dive. Of the many aircraft Jones piloted during his long Service career, the Camel and its successor, the Snipe, were the only aircraft he encountered with these peculiarities.⁸¹

Jones also ran into a bit of trouble while with this training unit. There was a practice amongst the trainee pilots at Ternhill to “borrow” aircraft to fly to Birmingham for weekends. Jones participated in this practice but was struck by bad luck, when, approaching Birmingham, it became too dark for him to read his map. Realising that he would not reach Birmingham in daylight he attempted a landing in a paddock. Unfortunately he overshot the desired landing ground, his aircraft jumped a hedge and turned upside down in a ploughed field. He was not injured and made his way to the nearest residence:

From a nearby farm house I rang Ternhill to report what had happened and arranged for a guard of soldiers to be placed on the aeroplane. I felt free then to go off to Birmingham by bus.

Returning to Ternhill on Monday morning, I expected plenty of trouble, so I was astonished when Colonel Cooper, the C.O. and Captain Latch, the Adjutant had nothing but smiles and sympathy.⁸²

Sometime later Jones established the reason for the sympathy. It turned out that the two officers had been engaged in a pleasure trip of their own. They had gone to

⁷⁹ *They served with the AFC: From Gallipoli's trenches to CAS in Contact*. Vol 42, No1, 1987. p. 4.

⁸⁰ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁸¹ NLA audio tape TRC 425/2 SIR GEORGE JONES.

⁸² Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

Birmingham with some women, using an RFC car without permission and unfortunately had been caught in transit by the Provost Marshal. Their explanation for the excursion was simple—they were on their way to investigate Jones' accident!⁸³

The next big event for George Jones was the successful completion of the training regime. On his recorded 21st birthday he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps.⁸⁴ However, he was not sent straight into combat with an Australian squadron. Instead he remained in England for a couple of months and was involved in at least one more flying incident before departing for France.

⁸³ Jones papers. *War Experience from 1915 to 1918*.

⁸⁴ Jones papers. *My Service in Egypt, Gallipoli and England*.

IV

A TREMENDOUSLY PATIENT MAN

By April 1943 the Air Board members, dissatisfied with the Government's inaction in solving the divided command situation, decided to act on their own. On the 6th of that month without Curtin's knowledge or consent, they devised a solution to the problem. The answer was to transfer Bostock to the position of AOC North-Western Area (NWA). Air Commodore J.E. Hewitt would replace him as AOC RAAF Command, while Air Commodore F.M. Bladin would be appointed AOC Southern Area, and Group Captain W.H. Garing would temporarily command No.9 Operational Group (pending the return of acting Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole from overseas).¹ The AOC NWA at that time was Bladin, who had occupied the position since March 1942. The NWA comprised the Northern Territory and small parts of Queensland and Western Australia. During 1943, the number of RAAF units in the Area was steadily building up but actual combat with Japanese forces was declining. Darwin, which had started the war as a vital port was becoming a backwater, while the strategic role of the RAAF in the NWA was to cover MacArthur's left flank during the New Guinea campaign and the advance to the Philippines. NWA based operational units' day-to-day activities included shipping patrols; bombing raids on NEI islands that were within range of the RAAF's under-equipped bomber force; and the occasional fighter sortie against Japanese reconnaissance aircraft.² Appointing an officer with Bostock's experience as AOC NWA would have been a serious waste of talent.

¹ NAA M2740/1/74. Air Board Minute. Board Paper No.269. 6 April 1943.

² P.N. Helson The Forgotten Air Force—The Establishment and Employment of Australian Air Power in the North-Western Area—1941-1945. Various chapters. A. Powell The Shadow's Edge. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic, 1992. Chapter 6.

The proposal ran into difficulties almost immediately as Jones received opposition from Langslow, Drakeford, Curtin and Shedden. Shedden directed that no action should be taken at that point and the Air Board's recommendations should have been submitted for formal consideration by Ministers for Air and Defence as concurrence of the Minister for Defence was required for changes in higher command appointments.³

Jones convened a meeting of the Air Board immediately to reconsider their position. The basic issue that faced them was how to remove Bostock and replace him with a more accountable officer and this conditioned the Air Board's decision making. In a minute to Drakeford the Air Board argued that the changes were essential in the interests of the Service and without them the administration of the RAAF could not be carried out efficiently. The Air Board made the questionable statement to support their decision: "In addition it was ascertained that General MacArthur would offer no objection to a change provided the officer filling the post were efficient."⁴ Jones also used existing Service regulations to support the proposal, stating that RAAF Command HQ was constituted by AFCO A44/1943 and thus was a separate unit directly administered by RAAF HQ and the personnel posted to it were subject to the same control and administration as personnel in every other unit. Jones believed he was acting within his rights to put forward this proposal because he and the Air Board were:

unaware of any custom, practice, direction or order which would require proposed postings to be submitted to and approved by higher authority before being put into effect.⁵

³ NAA M2740/1/74. Most Secret minute from Secretary to CAS. 7 April 1943.

⁴ We may wonder what approaches were made by the Air Board to MacArthur to ascertain his agreement in this instance, as there appears to be no mention of such an initiative among the relevant documents.

⁵ NAA M2740/1/74. Air Board Minute *Changes of Command*. Board Paper No.269. 7 April 1943. At the time the postings were proposed, the Air Board claimed it was unaware that such matters had to go to Ministers for Defence and Air. It was further claimed that the relevant document, titled

There was a heated exchange of correspondence between Drakeford and the Air Board after the Minister rejected Jones' argument,⁶ with the Air Board claiming the good of the Service transcended any personal consideration and the action it took was necessary for the proper administration of the Service.⁷ Jones also suggested that Drakeford should inform Curtin that the insubordinate attitude of Air Vice-Marshal Bostock had created an intolerable situation and was causing misunderstanding between RAAF HQ and US commanders.⁸ Drakeford continued to reject the proposal on the grounds that, in accordance with the recognised practice for the three Service departments since their establishment, all changes to higher command appointments must receive approval of Minister for Defence.⁹ This was a message that Jones either could not understand or refused to accept because he again claimed the postings were made in pursuance of Air Force Regulations, which he may have suspected overrode directions from the Minister for Air and the Prime Minister. Despite ministerial rejection, Jones did not give up and instead deferred the postings until Monday 19 April 1943.¹⁰

Bostock naturally objected to the plans, writing to the Air Board and pointing out that Hewitt was, at the time of the proposed transfer, AOC of No 9 Operational Group, which was a formation assigned to the AAF and therefore a subordinate formation within RAAF Command, as was the NWA. Bostock's quite reasonable

Changes in Machinery for Higher Direction of War (referred to by Drakeford when rejecting the postings) was never communicated to the Air Board nor filed in its records. The Air Board therefore assumed its lawful authority to effect postings was untrammelled by any such policy and notification of such decisions would be communicated to the Minister in the normal manner as per Air Force Regulation 29(f).

⁶ NAA M2740/1/74. Most Secret minute from Drakeford to CAS. 7 April 1943.

⁷ NAA M2740/1/74. Air Board Minute No.2. *Board Paper 290. Changes of Command.* 7 April 1943.

⁸ NAA M2740/1/74. Most Secret minute from Jones to Drakeford. 8 April 1943.

⁹ NAA M2740/1/74. Most Secret minute from Drakeford to Jones. *Board Paper No. 290/1943 – Changes of Command.* 8 April 1943.

concern was that the officer commanding a subordinate formation would supersede him, while he remained within the RAAF Command organisation in a position now subordinate to that organisation's AOC. Bostock considered that under the proposed arrangements his professional reputation in the RAAF would suffer severely and he reminded the Air Board:

Satisfaction with the manner in which I have carried out my duties has been expressed to me by the Commander, Allied Air Forces, who is the only authority to whom I am directly responsible for duties arising out of my present appointment.¹¹

We may question why the Air Board, an organisation that was using regulations to reinforce its decisions, was prepared to allow a situation to develop where an officer would be placed under the command of someone of a lower rank. Did the Air Board believe that Drakeford and Curtin were so ignorant of Service matters that they would have agreed?

Bostock appealed to Kenney who, in turn, telephoned Jones and advised him that he was adamant Bostock would continue to head RAAF Command and if CAS did not agree, Kenney would take the matter further with the Australian Government. Kenney then sent a signal to the Air Board, a body over which he had no authority, expressing his surprise at the transfers and pointing out that such a drastic move was not one that could be made by the Air Board alone. He suggested the posting order be

¹⁰ NAA M2740/1/74. Air Board Minute No 3. Board Paper No. 290. 9 April 1943. Here we have a curious situation in that the Air Board is complaining about the behaviour of a senior officer but at the same time its members are disobeying an instruction given by their own Minister!

¹¹ RHS 44/501/32. *A.V.M. Bostock W.D. Complaint by. Re – Posting.* Letter from Bostock to Air Board. 10 April 1943. There is no mention of any plan to promote Hewitt to Air Vice-Marshal among the papers on this file. We may wonder whether the Air Board seriously believed it could place an Air Commodore in a position over an Air Vice-Marshal. We may also wonder how a working relationship between Hewitt and Jones would have developed because of the personalities involved.

recalled.¹² It has been claimed in one account that the matter ended here, with considerable embarrassment to Jones.¹³ This was not the case, as Bostock's letter and Kenney's signal were considered by the Air Board, which then decided to take no further action on their own but instead forwarded the matter to Drakeford for a decision.¹⁴ Word of the proposed postings also reached MacArthur, who disagreed and advised Curtin that "Air Commodore Hewitt was not an adequate replacement for Air Vice Marshal Bostock."¹⁵ Bostock's approach to the matter can be considered from another angle. That is, while he was no doubt concerned about his career, he was refusing to accept a decision made by the Air Board, the body to which he as an RAAF officer was responsible, and he turned to Kenney to assist him in countering its orders. Bostock's aims in taking this sort of obstructive action are a matter for conjecture. It would appear that Jones' aim was to reunite his Service, to preserve its integrity by placing it, as a single body, under the command of CAS and the Australian Government. Bostock, on the other hand, made many attempts to stop this happening and to preserve a difficult command structure. Given his reaction to many of Jones' proposals to re-unite the Service, it is reasonable to claim that Bostock's actions were not always in the RAAF's best interests.

On 15 April 1943 Drakeford finally took the posting proposals to Curtin who rejected them and told Drakeford to discuss the matter with Kenney. Curtin reminded Drakeford of the Government policy associated with senior Defence appointments, whereby both the Australian Government and MacArthur had to agree to such appointments:

¹² D.J. Wilson Commander in the Shadow: Air Vice Marshal W.D. Bostock 1942-1945. pp 18 – 19.

¹³ Alan Stephens The Australian Centenary History of Defence. Volume 11. The Royal Australian Air Force. p. 74.

¹⁴ RHS 44/501/32. Air Board Minute. 14 May 1943.

The Australian Government shares a responsibility for the appointment of the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area. An arrangement exists with General MacArthur whereby any changes in the appointments of Commanders of the Allied Naval, Land and Air Forces, will only be made in consultation with the Australian Government. Accordingly, any change in the appointment of the officer responsible for the operational control of the R.A.A.F. should be subject to the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area.¹⁶

Drakeford met Kenney in Brisbane on 28 April and found the American was aware of the approaches to the British Government for the loan of Drummond “to serve in the capacity of Air Officer Commanding R.A.A.F.”¹⁷ Kenney suggested Drummond might want to make his own changes to the RAAF’s command structure after his arrival in Australia. Therefore he considered it was desirable for the Air Board’s proposal to be deferred until Drummond had arrived and familiarised himself with the RAAF. Drakeford told Kenney he had no objection if AOC RAAF position was filled quickly, but due to delays being experienced in obtaining an RAF officer he would not agree to postpone some of the recommended changes indefinitely. He advised Kenney that Bostock’s proposed transfer was necessary to ensure the “complete understanding and co-operation, as well as the amicable relationship which should exist between Air Force Head-Quarters and R.A.A.F. Command.” On his return to Melbourne Drakeford asked Curtin for an immediate decision on the request for Drummond or another suitable RAF officer. He told the PM that if the officer was not forthcoming, the changes to the higher command appointments should not be deferred. He based this advice on his discussions in Brisbane:

¹⁵ NAA M2740/1/68(1). *Formation of New Units & Changes in Higher Command Appointments*. Letter from Curtin to Drakeford “R.A.A.F. – Changes in Appointments and Organisation.” 24 November 1943.

¹⁶ NAA2740/1/74. Most Secret letter from Curtin to Drakeford. *Changes in Higher Command Appointments – R.A.A.F.* 17 April 1943.

¹⁷ The Australian Government’s drawn out attempts to appoint an AOC RAAF will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

I might here add that both Lieutenant-General Kenney and myself finally agreed that, whatever be the result of our negotiations with the United Kingdom Government concerning the loan of a R.A.F. officer, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock would relinquish appointment as A.O.C. R.A.A.F. Command, for duty in some other capacity.¹⁸

While in Brisbane Drakeford paid a courtesy call on MacArthur, who asked about RAAF appointments. Drakeford told of his talks with Kenney and he reported to Curtin, “General MacArthur appeared to be in agreement with them.”¹⁹

As we will see in a following chapter, the Australian Government failed to secure Drummond and MacArthur opposed attempts to appoint two other RAF officers – Joubert and Longmore. In June 1943 MacArthur suggested to Curtin that as an RAF officer was not available, the present divided command arrangements should remain and he proposed another meeting between Jones and Bostock (this time Curtin also stated that Sutherland and Kenney should also attend) to determine the best ways to eliminate the difficulties. Drakeford agreed to the meeting and told Curtin that he supported any proposal that would remove difficulties but considered transferring Bostock to another post “would be a very important influence in their solution.” Drakeford expressed surprise at MacArthur’s and Kenney’s change of attitude regarding Bostock’s transfer and assured Curtin “I wish to affirm that both officers did agree then that, whatever the outcome of our negotiations for the loan of a R.A.F. officer be, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock would relinquish the appointment as A.O.C. R.A.A.F. Command, for duty in some other capacity.”²⁰

¹⁸ NAA2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Changes in Higher Command Appointments – R.A.A.F.* 1 May 1943.

¹⁹ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Changes in Higher Command Appointments – R.A.A.F.* 1 May 1943.

²⁰ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *R.A.A.F. Command. Proposal for Appointment of an Air Officer Commanding R.A.A.F.* 24 June 1943. The proposed meeting, had it taken place, would have been stacked against Jones, with three of MacArthur’s officers attending.

One wonders about the seriousness of all concerned to solve the problems of divided command because on 13 November 1943 (five months after the initiative was proposed) Curtin advised MacArthur that the conference between Jones and the other senior officers had not been held but there had been numerous conversations between Jones, Bostock, and Kenney which had resulted in the satisfactory resolution of some problems.²¹ Curtin conveyed this information to Drakeford and added that while various problems had been resolved to Kenney's satisfaction, MacArthur had stated there were still numerous points of difference between Jones and Bostock and some of these related to the RAAF's internal organisation, which had an important bearing on the Service's efficiency.²² Drakeford was curious about these numerous points of difference and asked Jones for a report of his conversations with Kenney and Bostock.²³

Jones reported that the discussion had been initiated by Kenney at Bostock's insistence and consisted mostly of complaints by Bostock that his recommendations on policy and organisation were not always accepted; and undue delays had occurred in replying to his correspondence. Jones dismissed these issues as relatively trivial. Bostock also claimed RAAF HQ had adopted a policy of passive resistance, which Jones denied. Jones found that he was unable to discuss items in detail at the meeting because he did not have the relevant files with him. He did, however assure Bostock and Kenney of his fullest desire to meet the operational needs of RAAF Command. Kenney stated that it should have been possible for RAAF HQ to give wider administrative powers to RAAF Command in the same way the Fifth Air Force received its power while remaining subordinate to USAAF HQ in Washington DC.

²¹ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Curtin to MacArthur. *Organisation of R.A.A.F.* 13 Nov 1943.

²² NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Curtin to Drakeford. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 13 Nov 1943

²³ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 25 Nov 1943.

Jones replied that such a situation was not possible for units located in mainland Australia without delegating all of RAAF HQ's power to RAAF Command. He told Drakeford that neither Kenney nor Bostock could suggest any solution to the difficulties that would inevitably arise from interposing another HQ in the channels of supply, maintenance, postings, and promotion. Jones described the situation that applied to RAAF units outside Australia, which were treated as expeditionary forces, the commander of which had all the powers necessary to carry out his responsibilities. Jones claimed Bostock made it quite clear he wanted greater control of RAAF organisation and policy and that he resented any refusal on Jones' part to accept his recommendations. When questioned further, Bostock agreed that very few of his recommendations had been rejected and he accepted that responsibility for organisation and policy rested with CAS. Jones advised Drakeford that nothing could be gained by pursuing the matter further so the discussion ended.²⁴

Curtin met with Bostock in Brisbane in December 1943. During their discussions Bostock cited instances of unsatisfactory performance on the part of RAAF HQ. He told the PM he had asked for additional radar stations but had been advised the request could not be fulfilled because there were insufficient personnel to operate them. He had then been advised that RAAF HQ was in the process of creating Wing Headquarters, which were organisations that Bostock deemed to be unnecessary. Bostock also drew Curtin's attention to construction work that was proceeding and using vital manpower and materiel, even though this work was based on out of date operational plans and thus was no longer necessary.²⁵ In this last instance we may wonder what mechanisms Bostock had put to ensure RAAF HQ received the very

²⁴ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. *Higher Organisation of R.A.A.F.* 27 Nov 1943.

latest operational plans, so that wasteful or unnecessary construction projects did not proceed in the future. Jones complained about the flow of information from RAAF Command and we may suspect that one consequence of Bostock's headquarters not keeping him well informed was the commencement of construction projects that were no longer necessary.

The next major clash in the feud started on 2 February 1944, when Drakeford received an urgent signal from Bostock:

At direction of Minister for Defence request early interview with you on urgent matter concerning basis RAAF organisation and control. Without immediate clarification impossible to continue in present circumstances. Could wait on you at Melbourne or Canberra. Bostock.²⁵

The urgent matters referred to in Bostock's signal related to two incidents where RAAF HQ had issued problematic orders to RAAF operational units. In the first instance Bostock advised that RAAF HQ had issued an order relevant to the operational procedures for radar, which contradicted Bostock's own order on the matter. The second incident was even more serious and quite provocative. RAAF HQ had issued an order relating to submission of returns from combat squadrons concerning their efficiency for war operations. The order forbade these forms from being sent from No.9 Operational Group to RAAF Command HQ, even though No. 9 Operational Group was a subordinate formation within RAAF Command and Kenney held Bostock responsible for advice on the state of efficiency of RAAF units. RAAF HQ's new order made it impossible for him to fulfil this responsibility. Bostock complained about this to Kenney who issued an instruction countering the RAAF HQ.

²⁵ MP1217 Box 238. "Notes of Discussions with the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area. Brisbane, 29th November to 1st December 1943." p. 7.

²⁶ NAA M2740/1/74. Telex from Bostock to Drakeford. 2 February 1944.

The legitimacy of an American officer ordering an RAAF unit to disobey a directive made by RAAF HQ might be questioned.²⁷

The two orders may seem to be of a minor nature but it is the means through which Bostock sought to counter them that is noteworthy. Following the issue of the two RAAF HQ orders, MacArthur received a request from Bostock, asking that he be relieved of his appointment as AOC RAAF Command because he considered he was unable to effectively discharge his responsibilities to the Commander AAF due to the existing state of the RAAF. One would expect that if Bostock wished to be relieved of his command he should have approached the Air Board with such a request, and we would have every reason to expect that the Air Board would have agreed to his request. Instead Bostock turned to MacArthur, knowing that the Commander-in Chief would exert pressure on the Australian Government. In this instance Bostock's request was another means of getting his own way when it came to opposing an Air Board order.

Bostock later justified his direct approach to MacArthur at a meeting with Drakeford:

Since the A.O.C. R.A.A.F. Command, Allied Air Forces, is appointed by the Commander – in – Chief, S.W.P.A., and derives all authority from the latter, through the Commander, Allied Air Forces, and since the A.O.C. R.A.A.F. Command is accorded no authority of any sort by the Minister, the proper channels of communication on matters which affected operational efficiency are through the Commander – in – Chief, S.W.P.A.²⁸

²⁷ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 16 February 1944. Bostock noted that both these incidents had occurred while Jones was overseas on his successful aircraft procurement trip to the US and Britain.

²⁸ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 16 February 1944.

MacArthur passed Bostock's request to Shedden and asked for Curtin to personally review the situation urgently because of planned operations. Shedden passed MacArthur's letter to Curtin, who told Bostock to take the matter up with Drakeford.²⁹

Bostock's signal was a surprise to Drakeford, who questioned this unorthodox course. Bostock attempted to justify his action by stating he had taken up his problem with MacArthur, and it was the General who had referred it to Curtin. The issue for Bostock was that the existing basic organisation had become unworkable following an incident, which unmistakably indicated an open refusal by RAAF HQ to co-operate with RAAF Command HQ. "The untenable position which has developed could only be possible under the present system which is fundamentally unsound."³⁰ Drakeford and Jones met with Bostock to discuss this latest crisis on 8 February 1944. Drakeford would not accept Bostock's approach through MacArthur and told Bostock that when differences arose in RAAF matters he was at liberty to approach the Minister. If this process was not followed then the PM became a recipient of complaints that fell under Drakeford's jurisdiction and decision.³¹

Bostock told Drakeford that as an operational commander he should have been given administration and supply responsibilities commensurate with his command, and the contemporary organisation, which divorced him from these responsibilities was unsound. His view was that in the divided command situation, the operational commander should be the dominant partner rather than officer responsible for administration because the RAAF had been established for operational purposes. Under most circumstances, it would have been hard for Jones to disagree with that

²⁹ NAA MP1217 Box 238. Teleprinter message from Brisbane Secretariat to Minister. 5 February 1944.

³⁰ NAA M2740/1/74. Signal from Bostock to Drakeford. 3 February 1944.

³¹ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 16 February 1944.

point of view but in this case it again became obvious to Jones that Bostock's demands would have placed most of the RAAF under his, and therefore AAF, control. In this case, as Jones correctly pointed out, there would have been duplication of roles because two sets of administrative organisations would be needed. One would be there to cater for RAAF Command's needs while the other would look after EATS, which was still a major undertaking.³² Bostock appeared to have no answer to this logic.

After the meeting Drakeford told Curtin that Bostock's views raised the question of who should command the whole RAAF. One wonders how often Curtin needed to be told this. This was the fundamental question underpinning the whole issue of the divided command and it was the very question that Curtin kept backing away from answering. Drakeford then made another attempt to gain the PM's support for change and told Curtin that the officer responsible to the Minister for matters of policy, organisation and supply must have the ultimate power, which could not be given to the operational commander, unless that person was appointed to command the whole RAAF and made responsible to the Minister. Even at this stage, Drakeford still believed the divided command would have worked if co-operation had existed between RAAF Command and RAAF HQ, but CAS had always held the view that there should not be any division of operational control from that of administration, training and supply. This was an interesting statement to make, given Jones' refusal to hand over administrative functions to RAAF Command. Drakeford proposed that RAAF Command be merged into the RAAF making the Service a self-contained organisation as it was before RAAF Command formed. Under this plan, Bostock would be moved away from RAAF HQ, and in order to use all his experience would

³² NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 16 Feb 1944.

be given a new command (to be known as Northern Command), comprising 9 and 10 Operational Groups in New Guinea. This would form the RAAF field force. In his new position Bostock would control operations and administration and would command all ancillary units, while CAS would be the direct link between the RAAF and AAF HQ.³³

Curtin replied that the proposal to merge RAAF Command into the RAAF had been the subject of recommendations by DC, COSC and had been considered by the War Cabinet (as we know, Curtin had not followed these recommendations but instead had allowed MacArthur to advise against them). This time Curtin stressed the desirability of re-integrating the RAAF but pointed out that it could not happen because it had not been possible to appoint an AOC RAAF. He noted that Drakeford's proposals would put Bostock in a subordinate status to CAS, in relation to operational control of RAAF. As we will see in a subsequent chapter, Drakeford had, in December 1942 and January 1943 made recommendations to the PM that Jones be promoted. Curtin was not prepared to support these recommendations at that time because they involved the supersession of Bostock and he would still not agree to such a move. The PM was about to set off on a trip to the USA and Britain and during that time he would again attempt to solve the RAAF's command problems, as he told Drakeford:

I am inclined to revert to our original idea that the only solution is for me to discuss in London the possibility of obtaining a suitable officer as Air Officer Commanding, R.A.A.F.³⁴

³³ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 16 February 1944. Under Drakeford's new plan CAS was to proceed to Brisbane and work in close association with Kenney for a period of time sufficient for him to establish a complete understanding between the RAAF and AAF. He was also to devise the best organisation for the RAAF to ensure co-operation between the two air forces. While CAS was in Brisbane DCAS would act in his absence of and attend Advisory War Council and War Cabinet meetings.

³⁴ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Curtin to Drakeford. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 1 March 1944.

Drakeford drafted a reply, which because of Curtin's imminent departure from Australia was not sent. Never the less it is worth noting the level to which Drakeford was prepared to go in order to solve the problem. In his letter he reminded Curtin that back in December 1942 he recommended Jones be given acting Air Marshal rank while holding the CAS position. Since then CAS's responsibilities had increased as a consequence of the growth of the RAAF. Based on this, the Minister made the ridiculous suggestion that acting Air Marshal rank be given to both Jones and Bostock. The reason in the case of the latter officer was because of his responsibilities in operational control of RAAF units.³⁵ All concerned should be grateful this letter was not sent. Promoting one officer would have solved the problem. Promoting both would have solved nothing.

Jones and Operational Efficiency: Fighter Sector Headquarters

It was not long before Bostock took up Drakeford's offer of access in the event of an issue that would affect operational efficiency. On 2 March 1944 (less than a month after his last formal meeting with the Minister and Jones) he wrote to Drakeford about proposals for the clarification of the RAAF's fighter organisation, which he submitted to RAAF HQ on 15 December 1943. The proposal was designed to improve the efficiency of air defence and to meet RAAF Command's plan for the operational control of fighters while offering economy in personnel. Bostock stated that CAS's reply of 14 February 1944 rejected the submission, and that without consultation Jones had imposed his own organisation, which was unsuitable to Bostock's operational requirements. In his reply to Bostock, Jones wrote that he was not prepared to give the proposal any further discussion or consideration. Bostock disagreed with Jones' proposal and asked Drakeford to direct that there be no change

³⁵ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. *Organisation of the R.A.A.F.* 4 March 1944.

to the RAAF fighter organisation until a decision had been reached concerning the basic organisation of the RAAF, which Drakeford had under review.³⁶ Drakeford passed Bostock's letter to Jones, who objected to its contents and advised the Minister "This letter is cleverly designed to confuse the real issue which is that he is not prepared to accept my decision on a matter of organisation on the Service plane, made within the ambit of my responsibility, and after careful study of the subject." Jones believed Bostock was trying to create an intolerable situation to force change. He also objected to the manner in which the letter was written:

Under other circumstances, the measure of insubordination shown in his letter could only be remedied by charging the officer concerned with an offence, or by removing him from his position.³⁷

Jones claimed the real issue was the organisation for administration and operational control of fighter squadrons, which he had discussed frequently with Bostock and the AOC NWA during the previous 18 months. Jones added that he had accepted Bostock's views on the issue twice, only to find they were unsatisfactory and that Bostock himself had made changes and he added, "However, I would emphasise that the merits of my decision are not a matter which a subordinate officer has the right to challenge in this way." Jones' final advice to the Minister was that Bostock needed to be told he must accept CAS's decisions on matters that were the responsibility of CAS, and although his recommendations were required and would be given full consideration, he was committing a serious breach of discipline in challenging such decisions once they were given.³⁸ Drakeford instead directed Jones to meet with Bostock and to resolve the issue.

³⁶ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Bostock to Drakeford. 2 March 1944.

³⁷ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 6 March 1944.

³⁸ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 6 March 1944.

Documents on the official file dealing with these matters show that at about this time Drakeford started to seek greater advice from Langslow on matters pertaining to Service administration. In this instance he was still concerned about the Fighter Headquarters issue and sought advice from Langslow, who told him that Bostock's plan would make Fighter Sector HQ responsible for both the administrative and operational control of units. Such a reorganisation would have been suitable only for a fighter organisation and would be unworkable where the RAAF had composite organisations (ie, bomber, reconnaissance, fighter and ancillary units together). In Langslow's opinion it was very important that a Fighter Sector HQ should confine itself to operations and not be cluttered up with administrative work. Consequently the existing structure seemed not only more logical in manpower, but was also the most logical and efficient for the conditions under which the Service was operating in New Guinea and on mainland Australia. Langslow told Drakeford he understood the existing organisation had functioned efficiently in New Guinea since its inception 12 months earlier.³⁹ Drakeford replied to Bostock, telling him that RAAF HQ was responsible for determining detailed organisation of the RAAF, but in view of the importance Bostock placed on the matter the Minister had given it quite a bit of thought. Unfortunately he was unable to offer any view on what would best suit Bostock's needs and therefore he was sending Group Captain Hely to RAAF Command HQ to discuss the matter.⁴⁰

In the meantime RAAF HQ issued AFCO B.84/1944, which changed the name of Fighter Sector HQs to Mobile Fighter Sector HQs.⁴¹ This provoked an angry telephone call from Bostock to Drakeford's private secretary. Bostock said that he

³⁹ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Langslow to Drakeford. 11 March 1944.

⁴⁰ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Drakeford to Bostock. 14 March 1944.

had not received a reply to his letter of 2 March and complained that even though he had asked Drakeford to stop all action on the issue, RAAF HQ has issued AFCO B.84/44. He asked whether Drakeford would reply to his letter and what action the Minister intended to take.⁴² Drakeford took the call seriously and told RAAF HQ to defer action on the AFCO. He also made inquiries on Hely's discussions with Bostock. This latter point became a source of disappointment to the Minister because, despite his directive and subsequent demands, Hely did not travel to Brisbane until 23 March and his report on the discussions was not prepared until 30 March. Drakeford was quite concerned about the delay and directed Langslow to tell Jones of his:

extreme disappointment that Group Captain Hely's report on his discussions with Air Vice-Marshal Bostock concerning the Fighter Headquarters Organisation has not yet been furnished, a week already having elapsed since he proceeded to Brisbane specifically for that purpose.

The Minister wishes me to add that he considers that that delay reflects a lack of consideration for his directions, and he cannot but take a serious view of the delay.⁴³

Hely's brief report was sent to Drakeford on 30 March under a covering minute from Jones who, despite its origin within his own HQ, rejected the report on the grounds that it showed a considerable confusion of thought. Jones further claimed Bostock's ideas to be contrary to basic principles of Service organisation and contrary to earlier organisation proposals.⁴⁴

In the meantime, Bostock wrote to Drakeford again and stated this time that the divided command and responsibilities presented a serious threat to the success of

⁴¹ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from D of O to RAAF Command. "Fighter Sector Headquarters – Change of Name." 20 March 1944. The letter concluded with the sentence "CAS has directed that RAAF Command's attention be drawn to this."

⁴² NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Private Secretary to Drakeford. 17 March 1944.

⁴³ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Langslow to Jones. "Group Captain Hely's Report – Fighter Sector Organisation." 30 March 1944.

⁴⁴ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 30 March 1944.

future operations. Bostock was planning offensive air operations within the area of the responsibility of his command. Planning for these operations quite naturally was done in secret, and Bostock made a valid point concerning the difficulties he was experiencing:

Under the existing organisation of the R.A.A.F., I am required to “sell” my operational requirements to the C.A.S., who, while he has no authority over, or responsibility for, the conduct of operations, has the final determination of the form of the organisation and administrative arrangements which I must use. This procedure necessitates voluminous and protracted correspondence and staff discussion and frequently terminates in the C.A.S. declining to meet my requirements in the form best suited to my plans.⁴⁵

Bostock continued by saying he found it impossible to achieve thoroughness in planning and the preservation of security. The forthcoming operations called for the highest degree of co-ordination of all parts of the RAAF but he was convinced a unified effort was impossible under existing conditions. His major problem was explained in vague terms as the cumulative effect of many minor inefficiencies (each relatively unimportant in itself) that were almost certain to lead to failure with the inevitable loss of life, materiel and morale. Therefore Bostock was extremely loath to command his forces in hazardous operations under adverse conditions, which he considered to be avoidable and so unsatisfactory as to be unworkable. He claimed he had no alternative other than to request that the basic organisation of the Service be placed on sound military lines as a matter of urgency and as an essential pre-requisite to the successful participation of the RAAF in the impending offensive operations.⁴⁶ Drakeford, in his reply expressed concern that a unified effort was impossible to achieve and asked Bostock for details of the minor inefficiencies so that he could take

⁴⁵ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Bostock to Drakeford. 22 March 1944.

⁴⁶ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Bostock to Drakeford. 22 March 1944. Bostock concluded the letter with the advice that a copy had been passed to MacArthur.

action to correct them. He directed Bostock to meet (yet again) with Jones in Melbourne to discuss the RAAF Command requirements for operations. He asked for a report on the discussions, signed by both Air Vice-Marshals.⁴⁷

Bostock met with Jones in Melbourne on 10 April. While the meeting appears to have been conducted without incident, their subsequent work was another cause for disagreement between the two officers. Bostock wrote to Drakeford and told him that at the meeting it was agreed Jones would draft a report on fighter control and would send it to Bostock for further work. Instead Jones sent it straight to Drakeford, without Bostock's input. Bostock claimed that this was the second occasion when Jones had failed in a verbal agreement made with the AOC RAAF Command and the report Jones drafted was misleading because it evaded vital considerations (ie, *Training of Aircrews in Reserve Pools* and *Fighter Organisation*) and selected only minor aspects which were presented as the main issues. Bostock went on to outline his views of these two issues. He concluded his letter by telling the Minister that he was sensitive to the embarrassing situation that Drakeford was placed in because of contradictory information and he deeply regretted the necessity of it and apportioned blame to Jones: "However, while the unhelpful attitude of Air Vice-Marshal Jones persists towards R.A.A.F. Command, I can see no hope of a solution until the basic organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force is placed on sound military lines."⁴⁸ Jones received a copy of this letter and, as might be expected, immediately took exception because it was offensive and highly defamatory. Jones was clearly incensed and it would appear from the ultimatum he sent to Drakeford that his patience was at an end:

⁴⁷ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Drakeford to Bostock. 30 March 1944.

⁴⁸ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Bostock to Drakeford. 15 April 1944.

It is an extremely grave matter when a senior officer of a Service writes of another in this strain. If statements of the kind in question are true, the officer concerning whom they are written is unworthy of his office; if they are untrue, the officer making them is guilty of a serious Service offence.

In these circumstances, I feel compelled to request from you as the addressee of the communication, an expression of your confidence in me as the holder of the office I occupy, and an intimation that you will advise the writer of the letter accordingly, and that any future communications are to be couched in fitting terms and submitted through the proper channels.

Should you not see your way clear to accede to this request, I shall feel that you do not possess that degree of confidence in me as your principal professional adviser which should exist, and I shall feel constrained to initiate such Service or other action as may be necessary to refute the imputations which have been made against my personal integrity and my professional ability and reputation.⁴⁹

Jones, however, was not above admitting his errors and later in his life admitted he had been wrong about the training of aircrew in reserve pools but at the time he claimed RAAF HQ could not maintain both combat and training units in New Guinea, where the majority of RAAF combat operations were being flown. In hindsight he thought it might have been better for the aircrew if they had received training in the area they would be operating.⁵⁰

The Personal Conflict Deepens

Jones and Bostock remained in their respective positions and continued on their destructive feud, the next part of which began late in 1944 when Jones established the Directorate of Operational Requirements (DOR). One disturbing tendency which emerged as the feud continued was the more offensive nature of the correspondence between the two protagonists. While both officers may have had legitimate reasons for the stands they took, by this time the situation had degenerated to an almost

⁴⁹ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 26 April 1944.

⁵⁰ A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled *Transcripts Jones, Garing, Bostock?* "Interview - Air Marshal Sir George Jones."

juvenile level, and it is difficult for someone studying some of these incidents sixty years later to feel any sympathy for either Jones or Bostock. In the case of the DOR, Bostock told Jones “Considerable unnecessary confusion and inefficiency is resulting from the improper dabbling, by staff of your Headquarters, in matters relating to operational requirements of R.A.A.F. Command, A.A.F.” Bostock went on to say that DOR was attempting to exercise improper control over the operational efficiency of RAAF Command and it was his role to determine aircraft and weapons requirements. Therefore he told Jones that CAS had no place in this part in the decision making process:

Non compliance of my requirements in this regard, by the Chief of the Air Staff can only be justified by administrative inability to implement. The Chief of the Air Staff (in the R.A.A.F., as at present organised), who has no authority or responsibility for the conduct of operations, has no right – particularly no moral right – to dispute, on operational or tactical grounds, operational requirements demanded by the Air Officer Commanding R.A.A.F. Command, A.A.F.⁵¹

The tone of Bostock’s letter became quite hostile as once again he told Jones that as AOC RAAF Command he derived his authority from the Commander AAF and that his appointment entailed no responsibilities whatsoever to CAS, who he claimed was purely an administrative authority. He had attempted on numerous occasions to explain the situation regarding operational requirements to RAAF HQ staff only to have received evasive or indefinite replies. This, he told Jones “indicates either a lack of appreciation of the situation or a further manifestation of the attitude of non-co-operation and unhelpfulness which has characterised your policy towards R.A.A.F. Command (and to me in particular, as Air Officer Commanding), since the inception of the existing higher organisation of the Service.” Because of the atmosphere of non

⁵¹ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Bostock to Jones. 12 January 1945.

co-operation, Bostock stated that progress towards operational efficiency had been an unnecessarily laborious and tedious task.⁵²

Bostock continued by telling Jones that DOR was a member of a non-operational HQ and was not in a position to form sound and balanced opinions on operational questions. He claimed that Jones was taking advice on operational matters (which were not his responsibility) from relatively junior officers in preference to accepting Bostock's representations. He had been reliably informed that DOR was a Group Captain and had a staff of 20 – 30 experienced officers, which he considered to be a disturbing waste of valuable manpower urgently needed to establish efficient field units. No doubt Jones would have argued that staffing at RAAF HQ was his responsibility and not something that should concern Bostock. Bostock concluded with a statement to the effect that DOR introduced another obstruction against the development of the RAAF into an efficient fighting organisation.⁵³

Drakeford made another attempt to reorganise the command arrangements in February 1945. This time he recommended to Curtin that RAAF Command move to New Guinea or another advanced area and take over control of all RAAF units in the advanced areas, while operational units on the Australian mainland (apart from those in the NWA) would be controlled by RAAF HQ. In his letter to the PM, Drakeford noted the favourable progress of the war and the idea that the possibility of an attack on the Australian mainland was very remote. More importantly he pointed out that Kenney had moved his headquarters to Leyte but RAAF Command had remained in Brisbane. Given the progress of the war, it seemed obvious to Drakeford that RAAF

⁵² NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Bostock to Jones. 12 January 1945.

⁵³ NAA M2740/1/74. Letter from Bostock to Jones. 12 January 1945.

Command should be placed in an area closer to operational activities.⁵⁴ With the Minister's agreement, Jones met with Kenney on 20 February and proposed that RAAF Command HQ should move from Australia to a location where it could exercise command of RAAF units in active combat areas. As part of this proposal Jones included the units in Northern Command, the First Tactical Air Force and a new group to be formed from NWA based units that were to be used in future operations. At the same time the other units based on mainland Australia would come under the control of RAAF HQ, which would be responsible to Kenney for their deployment. Jones' proposal was for RAAF Command to become an expeditionary air force, with its commander having both operational and administrative control over its units. In this instance Jones recognised the issue of conflicting demands for operational resources between RAAF HQ and RAAF Command and stated that the disposal of all RAAF operational units would remain Kenney's prerogative.⁵⁵ Given the discussion in the past and all the arguments put forward by both sides it would appear that Jones' proposal was a compromise that should have been satisfactory to RAAF Command. This was not to be the case.

When the proposal reached the AAF, Bostock opposed it because he claimed it was based on unsound Service advice. He sent a reply to Shedden in which he stated the high level changes would cause confusion and have a detrimental effect on the forthcoming Borneo operations, which, in turn, could lead to unnecessary casualties or even defeat. MacArthur sent his own opposition to Curtin, pointing out that a large number of WAAAF personnel were employed at RAAF Command headquarters and because of Australian Government policy they could not leave Australia. Therefore

⁵⁴ A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled "Jones papers." Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. 7 February 1945.

the headquarters could not move until the WAAAFs were replaced by their male counterparts. We may wonder why Bostock rejected a proposal that would have allowed him command of a self-contained organisation with operational and administrative control. This was the type of control Bostock had been demanding ever since RAAF Command was formed. Perhaps it was because he saw the position of AOC of an expeditionary air force as one that would have been under the control of CAS.

Bostock again asked for the opportunity to put his case to the Government. Curtin declined to meet with him and instead sent him to a meeting of the Defence Committee on 6 March 1945. The DC, which included Jones, again agreed the divided command should end but also agreed with Bostock's view that it would be unwise to make any change to the command structure until after the Borneo operations. Curtin accepted the Committee's decision and advised MacArthur, who replied he was in entire agreement with the decision.⁵⁶ The DC had made a similar recommendation several years earlier and MacArthur rejected it. This time he agreed with the proviso that it be postponed until after the completion of the next major operation involving the RAAF.

Drakeford was still trying to sort out the command problem in April 1945. The solution this time was to appoint Bostock to a new position. In late April, Jones communicated to Drakeford that he had met with Kenney and the latter had suggested a training appointment for Bostock. In Jones' view the posting could have been arranged and MacArthur would accept Kenney's guidance and allow it to happen.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled "Jones papers." Minute from Jones to Kenney. 20 February 1945.

⁵⁶ G. Odgers *Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945*. pp 438 – 439.

⁵⁷ NAA MP288/12/0/5 *Papers of Arthur Drakeford*. Cipher Message from 9 Ops Group (NODECO). For Minister for Air from CAS. 22 April 1945.

Kenney's agreement to the posting proposal seems rather curious in light of all the preceding events and the planned *Oboe* operations in the NEI. The posting did not come to fruition, possibly because the Minister and the Air Board found themselves involved in a drawn out conflict with Bostock over a change to his title and events on Morotai Island.

Air Officer Commanding in Chief, R.A.A.F. Command

The final major conflict in the Jones – Bostock feud started on 25 April 1945, when HQ AAF SWPA issued the following General Order:

ANNOUNCEMENT OF COMMAND

Air Vice Marshal William D BOSTOCK, C.B. O.B.E., is announced as Air Officer Commanding in Chief, R.A.A.F. Command, Allied Air Forces, SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC AREA, effective from this date.
A.G. 210.31.

By Command GENERAL KENNEY
D.R. HUTCHINSON
Brigadier General
CHIEF OF STAFF⁵⁸

On the surface this appeared to be just a change in Bostock's title from AOC Commanding RAAF Command to AOC in Chief RAAF Command. The reason for the change of title appears to be that Bostock was the AOC RAAF Command but he had, as subordinates, a number of Area AOCs. The new title would distinguish him from the subordinates.⁵⁹ What is important is how it created a major confrontation between RAAF HQ and the Australian Government on one side and RAAF Command on the other.

In the days following the issuing of the General Order, Bostock sent a signal informing the RAAF area AOCs and other operational commanders of the title

⁵⁸ NAA M2740/1/74. Headquarters Allied Air Forces, South-West Pacific Area, General Order No. 2. "Announcement of Command." 25 April 1945. A copy of this order was passed to Langslow on 28 May 1945.

⁵⁹ G. Odgers Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945. p. 457.

change.⁶⁰ For some reason, Bostock neglected to inform RAAF HQ so the first staff there knew of Bostock's title change was when the Pacific Echelon advised that Bostock wished to tell the media in Manila of his new title. Pacific Echelon requested urgent advice on whether the designation was authorised.⁶¹ This information was passed to Jones, whose interpretation of the order was that it implied Bostock was the Commander in Chief of the RAAF in SWPA. His immediate response was to advise Bostock of the Australian Government's role in decisions of titles of appointment and to state the proposed designation was not approved.⁶² In his signal he added "The approved title of the Officer Commanding RAAF CMD is quote Air Officer Commanding RAAF CMD unquote. No variation of this title is to be used throughout the RAAF until approved by the Government and promulgated by RAAF HQ."⁶³ As far as Jones was concerned, Bostock's role at AAF HQ did not include the right to make changes to his own title. Jones was quite correct in rejecting the title change.⁶⁴

Bostock retaliated with a signal to RAAF HQ and the operational commanders in which he presented his view, and quite incorrectly stated that RAAF Command was a formation designated by the Commander AAF, not RAAF HQ, and the title AOC RAAF Command was designated by the Commander AAF, not RAAF HQ, in September 1942. Bostock was incorrect in this statement, because RAAF Command was constituted pursuant to RAAF AFCO A44/1943. Furthermore any change of command title had to have the approval of the War Cabinet and the Minister for

⁶⁰ Jones was of the opinion that Sutherland had sanctioned Bostock's signal. C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*.

⁶¹ RHS 36/501/620 *Higher Organisation of R.A.A.F. Adoption by A.O.C. R.A.A.F. Command of the title "A.O.C. R.A.A.F. Commanding in Chief, R.A.A.F. Command."* Signal from Pacific Echelon to RAAF HQ. 21 May 1945.

⁶² G. Jones autobiography. p. 95.

⁶³ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from RAAF HQ to RAAF CMD, 22 May 1945. Jones claimed, in an interview many years later, that Bostock's signal stated he was to be known as the Commander in Chief of the RAAF in the Pacific. He added "Well I couldn't stomach that." C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*.

⁶⁴ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*.

Defence. The US commanders had no power to designate titles or nominate appointments.⁶⁵ Bostock continued by stating that it was the Commander AAF who authorised the new title in April 1945 and therefore “The appointment of the officer who commands RAAF Command, Allied Air Forces, his title and responsibilities, are not matters which concern RAAF Headquarters.” Bostock was wrong again in this statement – RAAF HQ was responsible for the titles of all RAAF officers. Bostock concluded by instructing that the title Air Officer Commanding in Chief was to be used in all references to the officer who commanded RAAF Command until such time as a change of the title was authorised by the Commander AAF. According to Bostock, CAS had no authority to countermand the orders of the Commander AAF.⁶⁶ Once again a drawn out exchange of hostile correspondence ensued.

Naturally enough, Jones and the Air Board did not allow this signal to go unanswered. At its meeting on 26 May 1945, the Air Board discussed the issues pertinent to the title change and considered them to:

involve fundamental questions affecting the constitution of the R.A.A.F., the powers of the Minister and the Air Board, and the interpretation of the Assignment of the Australian Forces to the Supreme Command so far as the Air Force is concerned.⁶⁷

Bostock’s signal, the Air Board considered, was incorrect because, pursuant to Air Force Confidential Order A.44/43, the Air Board set up the RAAF Command HQ as a separate unit to be administered directly by RAAF HQ and posted Bostock as its AOC. In light of this, the Air Board judged the change of title to be a matter that fell within the jurisdiction of the Minister for Defence, the Minister for Air, and itself.

⁶⁵ In so far as the command of RAAF Command was concerned, nothing had changed the position from that in 1942 when MacArthur had told Curtin he did not propose to request that Bostock be named to command RAAF Command but that command would rest with CAS and Bostock was to exercise operational control over certain RAAF and USAAF Squadrons.

⁶⁶ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from RAAF Command to RAAF HQRS, RAAF CMD ADV HQRS, N.E.A., N.W.A, E.A., S.A., W.A., NORCOM, FIRST TAF, RAAF. PACECH. 24 May 1945.

⁶⁷ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 26 May 1945.

Therefore, based on this judgment, Bostock's actions in issuing signals of the title change were unauthorised and unconstitutional. The Air Board concluded "Such action, if allowed to stand, will seriously imperil the authority of the duly constituted authorities empowered to administer and control the Air Force, and will create a precedent whereby basic matters of organisation and administration will be taken out of the control of the authorities constitutionally responsible thereof."⁶⁸

Drakeford sought advice on the matter from Langslow, whose explanation of the title put Bostock's proposed appointment in a different light. Langslow reminded the Minister that, contrary to Bostock's claims, RAAF Command was not created by the Commander AAF but by the Minister for Air, CAS and Bostock himself. The title AOC RAAF Command was not designated by US authorities but was strictly in accordance with RAAF and RAF titles of appointments of similar character. Langslow also explained the title Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RAAF Command was a very important departure from long established practice. In the RAF, he continued, such a title was for very senior officers commanding huge commands, such as Bomber Command, Coastal Command etc, which comprised hundreds of units and thousands of personnel. The AOC RAAF Command, by comparison, commanded a much smaller organisation, with a lesser number of units, with a lower rank and with operational responsibility only. Langslow considered the adoption of the title would be very embarrassing to the upper echelons of the RAN and Australian Army authorities as it would create a precedent, which could have serious repercussions in those Services. It was most inappropriate for an officer having only operational responsibilities to be granted a title of AOC in C, because in the RAF the title C in C was given to an officer with administrative as well as

⁶⁸ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 26 May 1945.

operational responsibilities for forces under his control.⁶⁹ In light of this last piece of advice, we may suspect that Bostock orchestrated the title change as a mischievous means of gaining control of the RAAF's administration infrastructure.

Drakeford, after meeting with the Air Board and acting on its and Langslow's advice, instructed Mulrooney (Secretary to the Air Board) to direct Bostock to cancel his signals.⁷⁰ Bostock now raised the ante by telling Mulrooney "I regret that as a subordinate commander, appointed by the Commander, Allied Air Forces, I am unable to comply with your request to countermand the orders of the commanding General, Allied Air Forces."⁷¹

The Air Board considered its next move. It noted that Bostock had been asked to repeal some signals, not countermand one of Kenney's orders. His refusal at this point could have been the opportunity that Jones and the Air Board were looking for to have him replaced as AOC RAAF Command and hopefully bring the divided command conflict to an end. The Air Board decided Bostock's refusal to comply with the direction constituted a willful defiance of lawful authority as constituted by the Minister and the Air Board "Such conduct can only be regarded as mutinous in nature and calls for appropriate and prompt action in the interests both of Service administration and discipline and duly constituted authority." In this case prompt action could have taken two forms—disciplinary or administrative.⁷² We should note the use of the word "mutinous" in the Air Board's advice and ask whether, if allowed, Jones would have pursued a course of disciplinary action against Bostock for the crime of mutiny.

⁶⁹ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Langslow to Drakeford. "Higher Organisation of the R.A.A.F." 28 May 1945.

⁷⁰ RHS 36/501/620. Letter from Mulrooney to Bostock. 29 May 1945.

⁷¹ RHS 36/501/620. Letter from Bostock to Mulrooney. 30 May 1945.

⁷² RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 31 May 1945.

It was here the Air Board encountered a few problems. Disciplinary action may have proved to be a difficult choice because Bostock was the senior RAAF officer in Australia and it would be very difficult to find other officers of suitable rank and seniority to conduct a court martial. That is, assuming a minimum of four officers would be needed to sit on a court martial, Williams would have to be brought back from Washington and Goble from Canada. Perhaps senior officers could have been co-opted from the other Australian Services, or the RAF. Langslow was concerned about the overall repercussions on the Service as a whole if disciplinary action was taken and he advised Drakeford that CAS was aware of Bostock's intention to refuse to obey the Air Board order against the adoption of the title. If Bostock disobeyed the order Jones planned to charge him and this would mean attaching Bostock to RAAF HQ to enable disciplinary action to be taken against him (ie, a court martial). If Bostock disobeyed the order he would leave himself open to such a charge and the Air Board was committed to take action against him. Langslow considered that "The repercussions would obviously be serious, though the Air Board must insist on retention and observance of its authority in such matters." He told Drakeford that as Kenney alone authorised the title change without power or authority to do so, he should be informed of the position and also that changes in RAAF appointments and designations were administered by the Australian Government. Langslow expected that Kenney would arrange for the order's cancellation after the issues were explained.⁷³

Administrative action was seen as the best option and it was agreed "The Board considers that Air Vice-Marshal Bostock's conduct in refusing to comply with its clear and express direction in a matter of such fundamental importance requires his

⁷³ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Langslow to Drakeford. 30 May 1945.

immediate removal from the appointment of A.O.C. Headquarters, R.A.A.F. Command.” The Air Board directed that Bostock should be called upon “to show cause why his appointment as an officer of the R.A.A.F. should not be terminated.”⁷⁴

The action proposed by the Air Board would have given Drakeford another opportunity to solve the command problem, although it is highly likely that Kenney would have objected. Instead Drakeford told the Air Board to direct Bostock to comply with the earlier instructions.⁷⁵ In the meantime Drakeford briefed Beasley (the acting Minister for Defence) on the issue and asked that it be taken to higher authority. Drakeford told Beasley the promulgation of the order without seeking the agreement of the Australian Government, together with Bostock’s attitude, raised questions pertinent to the fundamental powers of the War Cabinet, the Minister of Defence, the Air Board, the Constitution of the RAAF, as well as the interpretation of MacArthur’s directive as it was seen in its application to the RAAF. Beasley was reminded that MacArthur had been given operational control of Allied units—he was not responsible for their internal administration, and appointments to higher Australian command positions were to be submitted to the War Cabinet through the Minister for Defence. In this instance HQ AAF had exceeded its authority and Drakeford therefore asked Beasley to make representations to MacArthur and request the order be cancelled. Drakeford concluded his briefing with the statement “The attitude adopted and the obvious misunderstanding of the position expressed by Air Vice-Marshal Bostock in his signal No. A. 915, dated the 25th May, are to be much regretted.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 31 May 1945.

⁷⁵ RHS 36/501/620. Minute by Minister. June 1, 1945.

⁷⁶ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Drakeford to Beasley. “Designation of Air Officer Commanding R.A.A.F. Command.” 1 June 1945.

The briefing was followed on 1 June 1945 by a meeting between Beasley, Drakeford, Shedden, Langslow and Jones. It was unanimously agreed that Kenney had no authority to alter Bostock's title. In addition, it was also agreed that the attitude adopted by Bostock in refusing to obey Air Board directions was irregular as he was subject to Air Board Orders. Therefore, the action taken by the Air Board was correct but there was still a problem in so far as what to do with Bostock. It was agreed that in view of Bostock's seniority, the relationship between Commonwealth Government and MacArthur, and the publicity that might be given to any drastic action against Bostock, Drakeford was to direct Bostock to withdraw his signal. If the signal was not withdrawn, then disciplinary action would be considered. Langslow directed Mulrooney to tell Bostock to comply with Air Board directions. As Bostock was in Melbourne at that time, the necessary facilities were to be made available to him so that he could comply.⁷⁷

Bostock next approached Drakeford with the patronising suggestion that the Minister might not have been aware of the full details of the position and of the conditions underlying Bostock's appointment. This under any circumstances would be an outrageous statement for Bostock to make, given that Drakeford had been Minister for Air for nearly four years and had been instrumental in the formation of RAAF Command. The Minister told Bostock that he was under no misunderstanding and that all high command appointments and designations were quite definitely the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. Bostock finally agreed to the directions given to him and, noting Drakeford's involvement, sent a signal to the operational AOCs countering his earlier signals:

⁷⁷ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute by Secretary Dept of Air. "Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force." 1 June 1945.

By direction of the Minister for Air, my signals A286 26 Apr and A915 23 May are hereby cancelled and no further action is to be taken thereon. Title AOC RAAF Command remains as promulgated.⁷⁸

It might be reasonable to expect the whole matter would have ended right then but this was not the case. The Air Board disagreed with Bostock's interpretation of who gave the direction. The signal, they concurred, did not comply with the directive.⁷⁹ Mulrooney was tasked with telling Bostock to send a revised signal stating the Air Board, not the Minister, gave him the order.⁸⁰

The Air Board discussed the issue again on 4 June 1945. Bostock had not issued his revised signal by this time and it was agreed that his failure to take advantage of the opportunity given to him to acknowledge his responsibility to the lawfully constituted authority could be regarded as persistence in his former attitude. Once again disciplinary action was considered. This time it was not only recommended that Bostock be removed from his position but that he be replaced by Bladin.⁸¹

At the same meeting the Air Board made another significant recommendation. That is, the acting rank of Air Marshal be granted to CAS. This was seen, quite reasonably, to be essential if the Government's decisions and the Air Board's directions were to be carried out in future. The Air Board concluded:

Unless this action is taken, a further insistence by Air Vice-Marshal Bostock upon his formed attitude towards Air Board's directions will cause serious practical difficulties having regard to the fact that he is the senior officer in rank and seniority in the R.A.A.F. in Australia.⁸²

⁷⁸ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from RAAF HQ to RAAF Command, AD RAAF COM, NEA, NWA, EA, SA, WA, NORCOM, 1st TAF, RAAF PACECH. 1 June 1945.

⁷⁹ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 1 June 1945.

⁸⁰ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from Secretary Air Board to AOC RAAF Command. 1 June 1945.

⁸¹ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 4 June 1945.

⁸² RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 4 June 1945. Documents on the official file make no mention of the proposal to give Jones the acting rank.

In the meantime Bostock signalled Drakeford stating he wished to appeal to the Minister for Defence on the grounds that he had complied with the Board's directive and:

(b) The direction contained in the Air Board signal C.428 can have no purpose but to attempt to humiliate me in the eyes of my subordinate commanders to the serious detriment of my prestige and control of operations.⁸³

Drakeford, Jones and Air Commodore Harry Winneke, an RAAF legal officer who was advising Jones and the Air Board on this matter, discussed the matters raised by the Air Board with Beasley, Shedden and Langslow in Canberra on 4 June. At the meeting, Jones laid out his and Bostock's signals on the table in front of all present and explained the sequence of events. Beasley asked who was the senior authority in the RAAF, to which Shedden replied the Air Board. The Minister for Defence then stated, "Well, Bostock is to be ordered to immediately rescind all his previous signals."⁸⁴ The outcome of the discussion was that the Air Board was told to send another signal to Bostock.⁸⁵

The signal to Bostock was sent under the name of the Minister for Air and told him that he had no right of appeal to the Minister for Defence. Rather it was his duty to comply with the orders of the Air Board "which is your superior authority."⁸⁶ Bostock complied and a signal was sent stating that his previous signals were cancelled by direction of the Air Board.⁸⁷ Bostock was in Melbourne at the time. He walked into Mulrooney's office and exclaimed, "Here's your bloody signal! I'm not going to do my job over it."⁸⁸ Jones later wrote in the autobiography that this, at last, settled the

⁸³ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from AOC RAAF Command to Minister for Air. 2 June 1945.

⁸⁴ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*. G. Jones autobiography. p. 96.

⁸⁵ RHS 36/501/620. Minute by Minister. 5 June 1945.

⁸⁶ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from Minister for Air to Bostock. 5 June 1945.

⁸⁷ RHS 36/501/620. Signal from RAAF CMD ADV HQ to RRAF HQ, RAAF CMD, HQ NEA, HQ EA, SA, WA, NWA, Nth CMD, HQ 1st TAF, PACIFIC ECH RAAF HQ. 6 June 1945.

⁸⁸ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*.

question of authority “and I had no further trouble from either Bostock or Kenney on this account.”⁸⁹ This was one of the few clashes that formed part of the Jones – Bostock feud from which Jones emerged as a clear winner.

The matter, however, did not end there and we now see Jones at his most vindictive. The Air Board met on 8 June 1945 and decided that, notwithstanding Bostock’s last signal, his earlier “persistently maintained attitude of disobedience and defiance,” which he communicated to all RAAF AOCs “renders his prompt removal from his present appointment essential in the opinion of the Air Board for the smooth and efficient functioning of the R.A.A.F.” The Air Board considered such action was necessary to nullify the hostility that had developed between itself and RAAF Command.⁹⁰ Ironically, one reason given by the Air Board seems to be a reflection of a point raised earlier by Bostock himself:

(c) To counteract the loss of confidence and respect which area commanders must have experienced in Air Vice-Marshal Bostock’s judgement and direction as a result of his conduct.

The Air Board again recommended that Bladin replace Bostock.⁹¹ At the same meeting Jones set in train another paper war by suggesting some sub-paragraphs in the RAAF’s Operational Policy Directive No 2 be changed. One change was to show that RAAF Command was responsible to the Air Board for “the war training of R.A.A.F. operational units that are assigned to the C.-in-C., South-West Pacific

⁸⁹ G. Jones autobiography. p. 96.

⁹⁰ An interesting digression at this point is a briefing note prepared by Mulrooney titled *Note for Secretary* and dated 13 June 1945 (ie, eight days after Bostock’s signal canceling his earlier messages). The final paragraph on this note begins with, “The Air Officer Commanding in Chief, R.A.A.F. Command, Allied Air Forces, is therefore responsible to the Commander, Allied Air Forces, for the conduct of operations of R.A.A.F. elements of the Allied Air Forces, S.W.P.A.” Mulrooney’s use of the incorrect title appears to have gone unnoticed. RHS 36/501/620. *Note for Secretary* from Mulrooney, Secretary Air Board. 13 June 1945.

⁹¹ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 8 June 1945. Submission to the Minister for Air.

Area.”⁹² In doing this he was complying with a request made by Bostock over a year earlier.

Drakeford replied to the Air Board’s recommendation on Bostock’s replacement 11 days later, stating he had discussed the matter with the Acting Prime Minister and the Acting Minister for Defence. The Air Board was told the Government agreed that as Bostock had eventually followed the Air Board’s instruction no further action should be taken.⁹³ In fact the Government would not replace Bostock because he was required to command Allied air units during the next phase of the Borneo operations.⁹⁴ Drakeford also asked to be advised of any future instances of Bostock questioning or disobeying any Air Board direction. The following day Drakeford advised the Air Board:

I have now received a letter, dated 20.6.45 from Mr Beasley, to the effect that a communication has been forwarded to General MacArthur, asking that Allied Air Forces General Order No. 2 of 1945 be cancelled, and that I will be advised further, upon receipt of General MacArthur’s reply.⁹⁵

The Air Board now sent Bostock details of the changes to Operational Policy Directive No 2.⁹⁶ RAAF Command did not agree with amendments to paragraph 2 as it was believed that the facts it contained in its unamended form were correct.⁹⁷ The Board discussed this latest turn of events and considered RAAF’s Command reply to be contentious and in need of further examination.⁹⁸ A hand written note, by Mulrooney, on the Board’s reply to Bostock reads “Matters referred to above were in

⁹² RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 8 June 1945.

⁹³ RHS 36/501/620. Minute by Minister. 19 June 1945.

⁹⁴ NAA M2740/1/74. Minute from Langslow to Drakeford. 28 Jan 1946.

⁹⁵ RHS 36/501/620. Minute by Minister. 20 June 1945.

⁹⁶ RHS 36/501/620. Minute from Mulrooney to AOC RAAF Command. 26 June 1945.

⁹⁷ RHS 36/501/620. Minute from RAAF Command to Secretary Air Board. July 21, 1945.

⁹⁸ RHS Air Board Paper No. 676. *Higher Organisation of the Royal Australian Air Force*. Air Board Minute. 27 July 1945.

the course of examination when termination of War and disbandment of R.A.A.F. Command rendered decisions unnecessary.”⁹⁹

Jones and Bostock fought each other for the duration of the Pacific War without a clear winner emerging. Bostock had his allies in MacArthur and Kenney, while Jones had the support of the Air Board, which he chaired and whose decisions reflected his thinking. It would not be accurate to say that Jones had the support of the Australian Government, because, as we have seen in this chapter, his (or the Air Board’s) decisions were on occasion opposed by the Government. Instead Jones had to fight largely on his own, in a fight that he really could not win. At best he could hope for a stalemate or a compromise to most of the clashes between himself and Bostock. He could not win because Bostock would turn to Kenney or even MacArthur for assistance in overriding orders made by RAAF HQ, and as we have seen, MacArthur had considerable influence over Curtin and thus over the Australian Government. Was Jones successful in his oversight of the RAAF during the Second World War? He was not totally successful because he failed to re-unite the RAAF under the command of the CAS (a task that would have been very difficult for most officers, given MacArthur’s influence). He did, however, manage to keep some of the RAAF under the control of the Australian Government, which was probably the best he could do in the wartime situation. Jones’ situation was summed up by Scherger who said that Jones was in an intensely difficult situation during the Second World War because of the running battle between himself and Bostock. Scherger stated, “I thought he was a tremendously patient man.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ RHS 36/501/620. Minute from Mulrooney to AOC RAAF Command. 27 July 1945.

¹⁰⁰ NLA TRC121/52. *Recorded Interview with Sir Frederick Scherger*. 13 November 1973.

V

JONES, CURTIN, MACARTHUR AND THE IMPERIAL CONNECTION

Having appointed George Jones to the RAAF's top position, the Australian Government, disenchanted with the problems of the divided command structure and the associated bickering, spent a lot of time trying to replace him. While it would appear that a simple way around the problem would have been to promote either Bostock or Jones to the rank of Air Marshal, the Government, for various reasons would not do this. One reason was neither Air Vice-Marshal was held in high regard by some members of the Government—the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr H.V. Evatt, on a trip to Britain in July 1943, confided to S.M. Bruce “both Jones and Bostock were hopeless.”¹ Another reason, as we will see, was MacArthur's opposition to any initiative that would result in changes to the status quo.

There were two other ways the Australian Government could have overcome the divided command problem. That is, integrate RAAF Command back into the RAAF (as discussed in the previous chapter); or appoint an officer senior to both Jones and Bostock as head (either CAS or AOC RAAF) of the RAAF. This possible appointment (which appears to be the solution most favoured by Curtin), together with Drakeford's unsuccessful attempts to promote Jones, will be looked at in this chapter. Unlike the attempts to re-integrate the Service, there appears to have been only a few attempts made to promote Jones.

Promotion?

The attempts to promote Jones started at the end of the year he was appointed. In December 1942 Drakeford raised the issue of Jones' rank with Curtin and recommended CAS be promoted. The correspondence on file associated with this initiative is important because it provides further evidence to reinforce the proposition that Jones' appointment was a deliberate decision, not a mistake.

In his minute to Curtin, Drakeford pointed out that the rank of Air Vice-Marshal was not commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the CAS position. Furthermore, he explained that Burnett was granted the acting rank of Air Chief Marshal while he was CAS; and Williams (when he was CAS) was an Air Vice-Marshal at a time when the RAAF was a considerably smaller force, ie before the outbreak of the War. He reminded Curtin that CNS and CGS held higher ranks.² Drakeford acknowledged that while other RAAF officers were senior to Jones (Williams, Bostock and Goble) and five other officers (including two serving with the RAF) held the acting rank of Air Vice-Marshal there needed to be some means whereby the CAS (regardless of who was in the position) was a higher rank than all other RAAF officers.³ Drakeford continued by stating it was desirable that appropriate status be granted to CAS to facilitate his administration of the RAAF and it would also be beneficial when he was dealing with higher-ranking officers of the other Australian Services as well as those from the US forces. He recommended

¹ Document 237 *Note by Bruce of Conversation with Evatt. London, 6 July 1943* in W.J. Hudson & H.J. Stokes (eds), *Department of Foreign Affairs Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937 – 49. Volume VI: July 1942 – December 1943*. AGPS, Canberra, 1983. p. 453.

² CNS in December 1942 was Admiral Sir Guy Royle RN (a four star officer – equivalent to an Air Chief Marshal), while CGS was Lieutenant General John Northcott (a three star officer – equivalent to an Air Marshal).

³ NAA A816/1/57/301/156 *Pay of Chief of Air Staff*. Minute from Minister for Air to Minister for Defence, "Pay of Chief of Air Staff." 18 Dec 1942. It would be reasonable to believe that Drakeford's proposal to promote CAS was sent with Jones' knowledge and Langslow's concurrence.

Jones be granted the temporary rank of Air Marshal from 1 January 1943, but he should continue to be paid his present salary and allowances. The acting rank would be for command and status rather than remuneration. Drakeford summed up his proposal with praise for Jones:

In making this recommendation, I would like to add that Air Vice-Marshall Jones is carrying out his duties in a very satisfactory manner and is, in my opinion, well worthy of the promotion proposed.⁴

Curtin was not forthcoming with a decision, rather he told Drakeford to give the proposal further thought:

While your proposal would not appear to affect the first named, (ie Williams) it seems to me that it would be tantamount to a supersession of Air Vice-Marshals Goble and Bostock.

As Air Vice-Marshall Bostock was specially selected for his present position of Chief of Staff to the Commander Allied Air Forces, and has operational command of the R.A.A.F. Squadrons allotted to the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, the relative position of this officer has not been dealt with in your letter, and I would ask you to give further consideration to the matter.⁵

Drakeford responded with his opinion that he considered the supersession of Goble and Bostock justified. Goble, he pointed out, had been in Canada since mid 1940 and thus had not been actively associated with policy, organisation or other developments connected with the RAAF. In relation to Bostock, Drakeford argued:

War Cabinet approved of my recommendation for the appointment of Air Vice-Marshall Jones as Chief of the Air Staff in preference to the former. In making that recommendation, I was firmly of the opinion that Air Vice-Marshall Jones was more suitable and qualified for that post, and events that have transpired since have reinforced that opinion.⁶

⁴ NAA A816/1/57/301/156. Minute from Minister for Air to Minister for Defence "Pay of Chief of Air Staff." 18 Dec 1942.

⁵ NAA A816/1/57/301/156. Minute from Minister for Defence to Minister for Air. 11 Jan 1943.

⁶ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 13 January 1943. At this point we may recall the debate over Jones' selection for the CAS position and ask: If Jones' appointment had been a

Promoting Jones, Drakeford argued, would not affect Williams, as he too was serving overseas and it was not expected that he would experience any administrative or Service difficulty from the proposal. Drakeford went on, explaining that he did not consider it sound in principle that CAS should have the “status junior to that of an officer holding a subsidiary, although important command.” That is, Williams was an acting Air Marshal occupying a position that was of a lower status and with considerably less responsibility than that of CAS. Drakeford added that the responsibilities of CAS justified the recommended promotion, which would greatly assist Jones in the administrative control of the RAAF. Drakeford does not appear to have considered the argument Jones used later, that RAAF Command was a subordinate unit of RAAF HQ. It surely would have provided a logical argument for Drakeford to point out that in a hierarchical structure, such as the RAAF, it was essential for the officer in command of that Service to be of a rank higher than subordinate commanders.

Curtin remained obdurate stating that he could not agree to the supersession of Bostock. It might be considered a rather strange argument, given the accounts of Curtin’s supposed opposition to Bostock’s appointment as CAS. Curtin then made another comment that confirmed the decision making process that led to Jones’ appointment:

I regret that I am unable to concur in your view that War Cabinet, in approving of your recommendation for the appointment of Air Vice-Marshal Jones as Chief of the Air Staff, did so in a manner which expressed or implied any consideration warranting the supersession of Air Vice-Marshal Bostock. The appointment of Air Vice-Marshal Jones was made in deference to your own personal preference for this officer. Air

mistake, as some have speculated, and if the wrong list had been consulted, would Drakeford have argued, at this point, that Cabinet had approved his recommendation for Jones’ appointment? Or, would he have argued that when he made the recommendation he was of the opinion Jones was more suitable and qualified for the position? Once again we can dismiss the story that Jones had been appointed by mistake. Interestingly Drakeford did not use Bostock’s rapid promotions (noted in an earlier chapter) to justify his proposal to promote Jones.

Vice-Marshal Bostock was selected for the other important post of Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Allied Air Forces.⁷

Promotion of either officer was not the option Curtin favoured. Instead he was keen to pursue the appointment of an AOC RAAF, and in his reply to Drakeford he said that he considered it unwise to change the ranks of senior officers until other issues relating to the overall RAAF organisation were resolved (i.e. the appointment of an AOC RAAF and the future of the Air Board). One can only be very disappointed with the Prime Minister's reaction. He had numerous opportunities to solve the problem his Government's decision had created. Promoting either Jones or Bostock to the rank of Air Marshal might have alleviated the RAAF command problems in the SWPA (even if it was only an interim arrangement, pending the appointment of an AOC RAAF). The issue of Williams' rank and position could have been resolved at the end of the war (assuming that officer remained overseas for the duration of the conflict). In light of the arguments to support Jones' promotion, it is interesting to compare the situation of CAS with CNS. On the basis of numbers of personnel, the RAAF exceeded the RAN by almost 400%. At its peak strength during the War the RAN had about 337 ships and 40,000 personnel. Not all were serving in the Pacific but the CNS still had administrative responsibility for them.⁸ The RAAF at its peak strength comprised in excess of 7,000 aircraft and over 155,000 personnel. All CNS from Hyde in the late 1930s, through Colvin, Royle and Hamilton until 1948 were four star Admirals.⁹ One might think that in

⁷ NAA A5954/69/239/15. Minute from Curtin to Drakeford. February 1943.

⁸ Despite his senior rank, in SWPA matters Royle came under MacArthur's naval deputy, Vice Admiral Carpenter.

⁹ Information supplied by Dr David Stevens. 15 March 2005. It is uncertain whether there is a reason why they were four star officers during the war, other than that Colvin, Royle and Hamilton were seconded from the RN and came to Australia with that rank.

terms of the overall number of personnel he was responsible for (when compared with the numbers in another Service) CAS should have been a higher rank than Air Vice-Marshal.

However, one also wonders if Jones had been promoted whether it would have made much impact on Bostock other than to injure his pride and further upset the Service practice of seniority. As we have seen, Bostock frequently claimed he was answerable to Kenney, not to CAS or the Air Board or to RAAF HQ and no doubt he would still have maintained this belief and still taken orders from the Commander AAF before CAS. It is possible promoting Jones may have complicated matters further as Bostock may have referred all his requests for support from RAAF HQ through Kenney to ensure what he wanted was supplied in a timely manner and without a perceived interference from Jones. There is one other issue we should consider; that is, Curtin referred all matters relevant to the command of the RAAF to MacArthur for approval. In which case, Curtin would have referred Jones' promotion to MacArthur and it is quite possible that the American, keen to maintain the divided command and acting on Kenney's advice, would have vetoed the promotion. As we saw in the previous chapter, Drakeford tried unsuccessfully again in 1944 to promote Jones.

AOC RAAF

It was noted earlier that Curtin preferred the appointment of an officer holding the title Air Officer Commanding RAAF to be in overall command of the Service and he put forward a series of recommendations to this effect to the War Cabinet meeting on 15 April 1943. The War Cabinet approved Curtin's recommendations for the future structure of the RAAF's high command. Cabinet agreed to the adoption of unified operational and administrative control for the RAAF as recommended by the Defence

Committee and the appointment of an AOC RAAF, who was to be responsible to the Commander AAF for the operational control of the RAAF and to the Minister for Air for all other matters. Cabinet further agreed that the unified control initiative would come about following the appointment of the AOC RAAF. In the interim, Cabinet directed that the procedures recommended by the Defence Committee in January 1943¹⁰ be put into effect “to the highest degree possible.”¹¹ The function and status of the AOC and the Air Board was to be considered by the new AOC following his appointment and after he had the opportunity to examine the management of the RAAF. The War Cabinet directed Curtin to ask Bruce to obtain the services of a suitable (ie an officer with considerable operational experience) Australian officer serving in the RAF.¹² In the meantime the status quo continued.

The following day (16 April 1943) Curtin advised Bruce of the War Cabinet’s decisions, and reminded him that a critical issue in the previous negotiations for a new CAS was the fact that he did not exercise any control over operations. Curtin gave the assurance this would change under an altered command structure. Curtin added that in view of the representations made by General MacArthur, the appointment of an AOC RAAF was a matter of great urgency and that Drummond was still preferred for

¹⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, on 7 January 1943, the Defence Committee made the following recommendations:- RAAF Command should be an RAAF unit to exercise operational control only over RAAF units in the SWPA; administrative requirements should be met through the existing RAAF infrastructure, (it was noted that this would require the closest co-operation between both parties); CAS was to provide suitable advisory staff for the AOC RAAF Command; the AOC RAAF Command was to keep CAS informed on operational planning; and, CAS was to keep the AOC informed on relevant organisation and administrative matters.

¹¹ NAA M2740/1/65 *Appointment of C.A.S. and Overseas Negotiation for A.O.C. R.A.A.F.* War Cabinet Minute “Agendum No 107/1943 – Supplement No. 1 – Organisation of R.A.A.F.” 15 April 1943.

¹² NAA A5954/809/1 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. 15 April 1943. (2782) “Agendum No. 107/1943 and Supplement No. 1 – Organisation of R.A.A.F.”

appointment to this position.¹³ Bruce made the appropriate enquiries but once again the British would not release Drummond. We know that the Air Ministry wanted to retain Drummond within the RAF because they regarded the work he was undertaking and the positions he held to be vital to the Allied war effort. Whereas it was suspected that his expertise would have been wasted if he had been appointed to the RAAF CAS position.¹⁴ We may also question whether the Air Ministry was reluctant to release him (or any other capable officer) for service in Australia because of the advice they received from Jones. At some time during the negotiations Jones wrote to the Air Ministry and told them of the divided command and the unfavourable environment in which an RAF officer could expect to be working in, if he was appointed to head the RAAF.¹⁵ Based on this advice the Air Ministry delayed appointing a suitable officer, by asking pertinent questions about the AOC RAAF's role.

Curtin, perhaps at last realising the importance of the RAAF's situation, sent a pleading cablegram to Bruce stating that unless a capable officer was appointed and took control of the Service there was a danger that the RAAF's effort might become prejudiced in the eyes of the Americans. Curtin explained that he did not want to upset the Americans because the RAAF needed MacArthur's support for aircraft acquisition from the US and because he wanted to ensure that the RAAF continued to undertake significant operations as part of the Allied war effort. Curtin then made a patriotic appeal stating that Drummond's appointment as AOC RAAF was in the interests of Empire and Australian defence:

¹³ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Curtin to Bruce. 16 April 1943.

¹⁴ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 20 April 1943. Bruce advised Curtin that Drummond had returned from the Middle East to the position of Member for Personnel on the Air Council and was therefore unavailable for the AOC RAAF position.

it is considered that the United Kingdom should even inconvenience itself to provide us with an outstanding officer who would be invaluable not only in the present, but in the future when offensive action is taken against Japan.¹⁶

The pleading was in vain, but as an alternative to Drummond the Air Ministry nominated other officers and Bruce advised Curtin accordingly and expressed his preference for two of them—Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore and Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferte.¹⁷ Bruce expressed a preference for Joubert.¹⁸ Shedden had his views on who should command the RAAF and advised Curtin of his preference for Longmore because he was Australian born (Joubert was of French extraction) and had a more distinguished war record.¹⁹ Aside from this preference, Shedden welcomed the appointment of either officer (or any other senior RAF officer) and he told Curtin he saw the role of the AOC RAAF as an outsider who would fearlessly purge the RAAF of poorly performing officers:

What we want is a good experienced officer who will clear out the dead wood in the senior ranks of the R.A.A.F., sort out the best men and establish them in the right positions with the best organisation. An R.A.F. officer can act strongly and independently and return to England when he has finished the job.²⁰

¹⁵ A.D. Garrison papers. "Interview – Air Marshal Sir George Jones."

¹⁶ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Curtin to Bruce. 28 April 1943. It would appear that Drummond had no objection to serving in Australia. In this cablegram Curtin noted that Drummond had approached Lieutenant General Morshead before the latter's departure from the Middle East and said he would have been glad of the opportunity to serve in Australia.

¹⁷ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 29 April 1943.

¹⁸ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 23 May 1943.

¹⁹ Joubert was born in Calcutta, India, on 21 May 1887. Longmore was born in St Leonards, NSW on 8 October 1885. He joined the Royal Navy and was commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant in 1904. He completed pilot training in 1911 and became a member of the RNAS. Longmore was transferred, as a Lieutenant Colonel, to the RAF following its formation in 1918. He rose through the Service, being promoted to Air Marshal in 1935 and Air Chief Marshal in 1939. In May 1940 he was made AOC Middle East and remained in this position for a bit over a year. After his return to the UK, Longmore was made Inspector-General of the RAF. He retired from the Service in February 1942 and stood unsuccessfully for election to the British Parliament. J Terraine *The Right of the Line*. Wordsworth Editions, Ware, UK, 1997. pp. 337-339. NW Gillman *Foremost Four* in *Air Enthusiast* 46. Key Publishing Pty, Ltd, Stamford, Lincs, UK, 1992. pp 65 – 67.

²⁰ J. Robertson & J. McCarthy *Australian War Strategy 1939 – 1945. A Documentary History*. p. 347.

Acting on Shedden's advice Curtin met with Blamey who advised he considered Longmore would have been a very successful AOC RAAF. Blamey had dealt with Longmore in the Middle East and was impressed by him.²¹

In keeping with the established practice, the Prime Minister referred the matter to MacArthur's headquarters. MacArthur consulted with Kenney who was unimpressed with the nominated officers and noted both Longmore and Joubert were cast-offs from the RAF and he wanted neither, preferring the status quo "I'd rather have Jones and Bostock even if they do fight each other harder than the Japs."²² Kenney advised MacArthur the nominees appeared to be second-string men who had been removed from their respective RAF commands.²³ Kenney considered Joubert's personality suited him better for dealing with Australians than Americans. Kenney scoffed at the notion of appointing Longmore just because he was Australian, stating he might have been born in Australia but he had lived most of his life in Britain and "is enough of an Englishman to have stood for election to the British Parliament." In short Kenney did not think it was a good idea to appoint either as AOC RAAF, as Longmore was out of favour with Churchill and Joubert with the Air Ministry, and he concluded with the logical argument "Australia must have the goodwill of both the R.A.F. and Mr. Churchill to ensure that her

²¹ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Curtin to Bruce. 28 May 1943.

²² Alan Stephens The Australian Centenary History of Defence: Volume II. The Royal Australian Air Force. p. 122.

²³ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 8 May 1943. Longmore was removed from Middle East Command because Churchill did not think he was carrying out his duties effectively and he would not accept dictates from Churchill. Longmore had succeeded Burnett as AOC Training Command and occupied this position between 1 July 1939 and 13 May 1940. He became AOC RAF Middle East on 13 May 1940 and served until 1 June 1941, when he was replaced by Tedder. J. Terraine The Right of the Line. pp. 337–339. Joubert's problems as AOC Coastal Command stemmed from shipping losses in the Atlantic Ocean at a time when no U-boat loss had been attributed to Coastal Command aircraft. Slessor replaced Joubert as AOC Coastal Command in February 1943. J. Terraine

needs for aircraft, equipment and personnel can be taken care of.”²⁴ These negative comments ensured that neither officer was appointed and once again an opportunity to appoint an overall commander for the Service was lost. In hindsight we may question whether, at this stage of the war, either of these officers would have been able to solve the problems associated with the divided command, given the influence of the US commanders (with their low opinions of Longmore and Joubert) and the Australian politicians over the RAAF.

Regardless of the lost opportunity, Drakeford continued to pressure Curtin during May and June 1943 for agreement to remove Bostock. Curtin resisted and reminded him of statements made during Drakeford’s discussions with MacArthur and Kenney. That is, while the appointment of RAAF officers was a matter for the Australian Government, should Bostock be removed, MacArthur would give him a letter “of the highest commendation for the very able manner in which he had performed his duties at Allied Air Headquarters,” (a situation which would have been embarrassing for the Australian Government and in particular for Drakeford and the Air Board) and insist he be replaced by an equally capable officer. (No doubt MacArthur and Kenney would determine whether any officer nominated by the Australian Government was capable.) Drakeford pointed out the obvious contradiction in MacArthur’s statement (that is, the appointment of RAAF officers was the Government’s business but at the same time MacArthur would make things difficult for the Government if Bostock was removed from his position) but Curtin disagreed, stating that MacArthur as Supreme Commander had the right to express

The Right of the Line. pp. 425-427. J. Slessor The Central Blue. Cassell & Co Ltd, London, UK, 1956. p. 464.

his views on changes to senior positions under his command.²⁵ Again, the usual pattern was followed, MacArthur and Kenney, unwittingly assisted by Curtin, succeeded in blocking a resolution of the command impasse.

Jones was not in favour of the proposal to bring a senior RAF officer to Australia (perhaps fearing that he might be replaced) and wrote to Drakeford on 25 November 1943. In this letter he expressed his concern over the Government's view that RAAF's senior officers were not qualified to command their own Service because they had gained little or no operational experience before the war. Jones pointed out the contradiction in the Government's argument by stating that RAF and USAAF officers were in the same situation (that is, the USAAF and RAF had not been involved in recent major conflicts prior to the Second World War). In his opinion RAAF officers had prepared themselves during the years preceding the war for command by attending Staff College and other training courses and it was unfair that the Government overlooked these qualifications. Jones countered the Government's argument that the experience gained from organising and training the RAAF was unrelated to high command by stating he considered "that the principal considerations in successful High Command relate to organisation and building up of resources and a sound knowledge of the capabilities of Air Forces which can only be obtained by years of training." Jones concluded by telling Drakeford:

Experience in the operational directions of Air Forces is, of course, very desirable, but this has many specialised aspects and experience in one theatre of war or type of operation is likely to be quite different to that required in others.

I consider that the senior R.A.A.F. officers available to fill the highest Command in the Service are likely to be more suitable to hold such

²⁴ J. Robertson & J. McCarthy Australian War Strategy 1939 – 1945. A Documentary History. p. 348. On his return from the Middle East, Longmore was appointed Inspector-General of the RAF, a position he retained until he left the Service.

²⁵ G. Odgers Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945. p. 18.

appointment than officers who are not members of the R.A.A.F. and have no experience in this theatre of war and would recommend the examination of the personal records of R.A.A.F. officers concerned if and when the matter is under consideration.²⁶

The Government disregarded Jones' concerns and on 29 November 1943 Curtin and Shedden met with MacArthur in Brisbane to discuss a number of issues including the RAAF high command. MacArthur commented on the effect the divided command was having on the Service's operational efficiency but he said that as no change had been made to the organisation he had been content to make the best of a bad job. He added that he preferred the divided command to the appointment of a British officer to command the RAAF.²⁷

Another attempt to replace Jones occurred during May and June 1944 when Curtin and Shedden visited Britain. While there, Curtin met with Drummond, as the Australian Government was still interested in this officer occupying the "highest Australian air post."²⁸ The Air Ministry, however, still would not release him for the Australian appointment and this led Curtin to request from the British government the services of another suitable officer. On this occasion Curtin approached his British counterpart and briefed Churchill on the RAAF command situation:

The division of the control of the R.A.A.F. between the two officers has not worked satisfactorily and the Defence Committee has recommended the adoption of the principle of unified operational and administrative control. Both of the officers concerned also agree that the present arrangement is unsatisfactory.²⁹

²⁶ A.D. Garrison papers. Folder titled "Jones papers." Minute from Jones to Drakeford "Higher Command of the R.A.A.F." 25 November 1943.

²⁷ NAA MP1217, Box 238. "Notes of Discussions with the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area. Brisbane, 29th November to 1st December, 1943." p. 7.

²⁸ NAA A5954/1/238/1. *Higher Direction of the RAAF. Following upon Organisation of United States Fifth Air Force and Establishment of R.A.A.F. Command – September 1942. File No 2 (From Prime Minister's Visit Abroad) (May 1944).* Cablegram from Curtin to Drakeford. 6 May 1944 and Cablegram from Drakeford to Curtin. 9 May 1944.

²⁹ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Curtin to Churchill. 24 May 1944.

He then met with Churchill, Portal and Sir Archibald Sinclair (the Secretary of State for Air) to state his case, which was still for the appointment of a suitable RAF officer with recent operational experience. The preference was for this officer to be an Australian serving with the RAF. Sinclair supported the Australian request and told Curtin “We attach great importance to your proposal. We are most anxious to offer you the best available officer.”³⁰

During the subsequent discussions between Curtin and Portal, two officers were nominated: Air Marshal Sir Keith Park³¹ and Air Vice-Marshal H.W.L. Saunders³² (without either first being consulted by the Air Ministry). Both officers were highly recommended in terms of their operational experience but still Curtin would not make a decision at that point. Instead he waited until he returned to Australia before taking further action.

In June 1944, on his return to Australia, Curtin broached the subject of RAAF command arrangements with MacArthur at a meeting in Brisbane. Curtin told MacArthur that the only practical manner whereby the administrative and operational functions of the RAAF could be integrated appeared to be by the selection of an officer who would be in a superior position to both Jones and Bostock. On this occasion MacArthur agreed to the appointment of a senior officer and told Curtin:

³⁰ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Sinclair to Curtin. 27 May 1944.

³¹ In 1918 Park, then a Major, was appointed CO of 48 SQN RFC. One of his fellow pilots in this Squadron at that time was Lieutenant W.D. Bostock.

³² NAA MP1217, Box 238. War Cabinet Agendum 396/1944. “Appointment of the Chief of Air Staff.” 3 Aug 1944.

The question was entirely one for the Australian Government, and if it wished to make an appointment as proposed, he would give the officer his fullest co-operation.³³

MacArthur, however, hesitated at the idea of an integrated structure for the RAAF. Instead he suggested to the PM that the RAAF units in the southern areas of Australia could be integrated but there was still a need for two operational commands, one in New Guinea and one in the NWA. Both would have to be placed under an officer on the staff of the Commander AAF – to whom each would be responsible for operations, while they would still be subordinate to the new CAS.³⁴ This proposal still left the RAAF as a divided organisation but in a better situation than the existing situation because there would have been an AOC senior to the operational commanders.

A bizarre ingredient was introduced into the question of the command structure at the same meeting. During the course of their discussion (which covered numerous defence issues in addition to those pertinent to the RAAF) MacArthur told Curtin:

it was General Blamey's ambition to become Commander of the whole of the Australian Defence Forces in the same manner that General MacArthur is Commander of all the Naval, Military and Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area. General Blamey had sought General MacArthur's support for the proposal that, to overcome the difficulties between the Chief of the Air Staff (Air Vice-Marshal Jones) and the Officer Commanding, R.A.A.F. (Air Vice-Marshal Bostock), he should be given the command of the R.A.A.F. as well as the Australian Army.³⁵

This revelation should not have come as a complete surprise to the PM because as early as November 1942 Curtin himself had proposed to the Advisory War Council that

³³ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Curtin to Drakeford. 13 July 1944.

³⁴ NAA MP1217 Box 238. War Cabinet Agendum 396/1944.

³⁵ Document 206 *Notes by Shedden of Discussions with MacArthur. Brisbane, 27 June 1944* in W.J. Hudson (ed) Department of Foreign Affairs Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937 – 49, Volume VII: 1944. AGPS, Canberra, 1988. p. 424.

the Army C-in-C could take over responsibility for the RAAF.³⁶ The proposal progressed no further than the Council meeting. Three months later, at a meeting in Canberra on 12 February 1943, Blamey and Curtin discussed the command problems experienced by the RAAF. Blamey's solution was that he be appointed as C-in-C of both the Army and the RAAF. Curtin by this time had revised his opinion and objected so that Blamey quickly changed his mind and recommended Drummond be appointed AOC RAAF.³⁷ One can only speculate on the effect on the morale of the senior RAN and RAAF officers had the Army Commander been placed in overall command of their Services.

Following this meeting, Curtin advised Drakeford of his discussions in Britain and with MacArthur. In his minute to Drakeford, Curtin put forward his own views—the new officer should be an Air Marshal and should be appointed CAS. This was a departure from his earlier belief that to sort out the command problems it would be necessary to appoint an AOC RAAF. He preferred Park for the CAS position, although this left him with another problem, that is “it would, of course, be necessary to find another position for Air Vice-Marshal Jones.”³⁸ Drakeford replied that he considered Drummond or an officer (especially an Australian born officer) with similar experience would have been

³⁶ D. Horner Blamey: The Commander in Chief. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW. 1998. p. 272. At this meeting, Percy Spender, an opposition member of the Council agreed some sections of the RAAF could be placed under Army control.

³⁷ D. Horner Blamey: The Commander in Chief. p. 393 and 453. The Government would have then been faced with another command problem as Blamey and CNS were both four star officers. During the course of the War some other officers had their suspicions about Blamey's aspirations. Former RAN Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin RN thought Blamey planned to command all three Services. A Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Commander Shepherd, visited Australia in November 1943 and reported back to London that Blamey wanted to be C-in-C of 'an all British' force comprising the RAN, AIF, AMF, RAAF and components of the RN.

³⁸ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Curtin to Drakeford. 13 July 1944.

more suitable, but he concurred with the selection of Park and told the PM plans for the RAAF integration should not be abandoned:

I think it desirable that the objective should be kept in mind and implemented as soon as it is practicable and operationally advantageous having particular regard to the size and disposition of the Empire and Allied Forces as maybe engaged later against the Japanese.³⁹

In reply to the question of Jones' future employment, Drakeford considered there was still a place for the Air Vice-Marshal within RAAF HQ after Park's appointment:

the most appropriate appointment for Air Vice-Marshal Jones would be that of Vice Chief of the Air Staff – a post in which he could render most valuable service and assistance to the new R.A.F. appointee by reason of his wide knowledge of air force administration, air staff policy, organisation, training activities etc. of the R.A.A.F.⁴⁰

The matter was scheduled for debate by the War Cabinet again and the astute Shedden summed up the situation in a briefing he prepared for Curtin in July 1944. In his opinion it was desirable there should be an Australian in the CAS position, if possible. As Bostock was unacceptable to Drakeford and it was unfair to put Jones over him, there was "no alternative to the present unsatisfactory set-up other than the appointment of an RAF officer." Shedden did not consider this alternative to be ideal but:

due to the difficulty which has long beset us in the Department of Air, I favour the appointment of Air Marshal Sir Keith Park with his present rank, at a rate not exceeding that for the Chief of the Naval Staff. Sir Charles Burnett was given too high a rank and rate of pay by the Menzies' Govt.

As Sir Charles Portal had not consulted Air Marshal Park on the submission of his name, the matter will have to be handled with care to prevent a premature leak.⁴¹

³⁹ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. 30 July 1944.

⁴⁰ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Drakeford to Curtin. 30 July 1944. We may wonder whether Drakeford was going to create a new position of Vice Chief of Air Staff or whether he meant Jones was to become DCAS.

⁴¹ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Minute from Shedden to Curtin *Appointment of Chief of the Naval Staff and Chief of the Air Staff*. 31 July 1944.

Curtin submitted three recommendations to the War Cabinet meeting on 4 August 1944. That is, Park was to be appointed as CAS, at his present rank; the principle of unified operational and administrative control for the RAAF was reaffirmed and the details were to be finalised after Park arrived; and Jones' future appointment would be decided after Park became CAS.⁴² In the notes on the Cabinet Agendum, Curtin gave the same advice to his colleagues as he had to MacArthur—that it was evident the only way to integrate the RAAF's operational and administrative functions was to appoint an officer who would be superior to both Jones and Bostock.⁴³

The Australian War Cabinet approved the three recommendations.⁴⁴ Even so, the Government hesitated for another month before negotiating the appointment, while rates of pay and appointment terms were sorted out by Bruce (on behalf of the Australian Government) and the Air Ministry. When detailing the Australian Government's position for the negotiations, Curtin told Bruce that the Government was keen to have Park appointed for 12 months and possibly for a further 12 months after his initial term. It was proposed Park would retain his rank and would be paid an annual salary of £3,000 together with an allowance of £150 if his wife accompanied him to Australia or £450 if she remained in Britain. In addition, as Australian tax rates were then higher than the British rates he would be granted favourable tax concessions.⁴⁵ Curtin added:

⁴² NAA A5954/1/238/1. War Cabinet Agendum. Agendum No 396/1944 "Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff." 3 August 1944. Park's pay and conditions were to be arranged by the Treasurer and Drakeford, in consultation with Curtin.

⁴³ NAA MP1217, Box 238. War Cabinet Agendum No 396/1944 "Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff." 3 August 1944.

⁴⁴ NAA A5954/810/2 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting*. (3693) Agendum 396/1944 – Appointment of Chief of the Air Staff. 4 August 1944.

⁴⁵ NAA A2908/1/A28 *Chief of the Air Staff*. Cablegram from Prime Minister to High Commissioner, London. 5 Sept 1944.

The Government has reaffirmed the principle of unified operational and administrative control of the R.A.A.F., and detailed arrangements to give effect to this would be made when Air Marshal Park takes up appointment and after he has had an opportunity of examining the position.⁴⁶

Bruce passed the word to Sinclair that Park was the preferred officer.⁴⁷ In response, Sinclair advised that while Park was “ear-marked for an important R.A.F. Command,” he supported the proposition for Park to take up the RAAF appointment. Sinclair, however, told Bruce of the conditions imposed by the Air Ministry that governed Park’s release to the RAAF. Bruce advised Curtin of these terms:

He pointed out, however, that it was of the utmost importance that there should be a clear understanding as to what Park’s position would be in Australia and suggested that while the detailed arrangements could be left to be worked out until after Park arrived in Australia, his broad functions should be laid down before Park left. He accordingly asked me to leave the matter over in order to give him an opportunity of thinking about it and consulting Portal.⁴⁸

Sinclair asked Bruce to ascertain from Curtin whether MacArthur’s agreement had been obtained to the “principle of unified operational and administrative control of the R.A.A.F.” Not only was Sinclair keen to see a unified control for the RAAF reinstated but he also was keen to re-establish some form of Australian control over the elements of the Service. He also suggested that it would be desirable if MacArthur’s agreement could be obtained to certain issues relevant to the high command of the RAAF. That is, the AOC RAAF should be responsible to the Australian Government for the operational and administrative control of the RAAF. In this instance operational control included all matters of operational policy and allocation and organisation of RAAF units, formations and staff, or their integration into US air commands. The AOC RAAF should deal

⁴⁶ NAA A2908/1/A28. Cablegram from Prime Minister to High Commissioner, London. 5 Sept 1944.

⁴⁷ NAA A2908/1/A28. Minute from Bruce to Sir Archibald Sinclair. 12 Sept 1944.

nominally with the Commander AAF but should have access to the Supreme Commander. For these functions the AOC RAAF would have the right to maintain a deputy and appropriate staff alongside the AAF HQ. In the case of RAAF units seconded to form part of an Allied task force, the operational direction would be exercised by the commander of that task force who would also be responsible for local administration.

Sinclair asked the Australian Government to clarify these points before he approached Park. However, he concluded negatively “I have grave doubts if Park would accept even if asked.”⁴⁹

Curtin met with MacArthur, in Canberra, on 30 September 1944 and discussed the latest command proposal. The PM again ran into obstructions as MacArthur had changed his mind since their June meeting and told Curtin the strategic situation in the SWPA had progressed so quickly that a different situation had developed from that which had existed at the time of their last meeting. In light of this he considered it unnecessary to bring a senior RAF officer to Australia. MacArthur referred to the problems with Jones and Bostock but claimed nothing serious had resulted “and he felt that any differences that had existed in the past were now quiet.” MacArthur added “had the changes taken place when first mooted, advantages would have accrued, but he now considered it too late to make such a change.”⁵⁰

One cannot help but be amazed by MacArthur’s concluding remark and one wonders what Curtin thought when it was made. It would appear to any observer that MacArthur and Kenney had obstructed all attempts by Curtin and Drakeford to sort out the RAAF

⁴⁸ NAA A2908/1/A28. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 28 Sept 1944.

⁴⁹ NAA A2908/1/A28. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin. 28 Sept 1944.

⁵⁰ NAA MP 1217, Box 238. “Notes of Discussions with the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area.” 30 September 1944.

command problem, albeit a problem the politicians had allowed to develop in the first place. Still the questions must be asked, why, when MacArthur had said that it was a matter for the Australian Government to decide, did Curtin continually refer all RAAF command proposals to the Supreme Commander rather than take the initiative and quickly resolve the problem? We cannot help but be very disappointed in the PM's performance in this matter and wonder why he was so out of touch, or ill informed, on the RAAF's situation that he accepted MacArthur's word at this last meeting? Shedden gave his view of the American commander's aims in advice he provided to Curtin in October 1944. He told the PM it was the opinion of senior RAAF officers that the Americans did not want the Service unified under a single officer. They preferred the divided command "because they can play one side off against the other." Shedden, who had initially been impressed with MacArthur but had become disillusioned with the General as the war progressed,⁵¹ told Curtin he agreed with the correctness of these opinions.⁵² The opportunities for this mischief might have declined with the appointment of an AOC RAAF. There can be no doubt that a man of Park's stature, in overall command of the Service and appointed under the terms proposed by Sinclair, would have asserted the RAAF's views when dealing with the Americans, far more effectively than the two belligerent Air Vice-M Marshals.⁵³

Contrary to MacArthur's advice, things were not quiet between Jones and Bostock, as a couple of signals passed between them indicate. On 19 January 1945 Jones' signal to Bostock on an air staff policy matter contained the following paragraph:

⁵¹ D Horner *Defence Supremo*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000. pp. 162-163.

⁵² J. Mordike *RAAF Organisation, Command and Politics* in J. Mordike (ed) *The Home Front*. p. 16. D. Horner *Curtin and MacArthur at War in Wartime*. No2, Apr 1998. p. 37.

⁵³ V. Orange *Sir Keith Park*. Methuen, London, UK, 1984. p. 194.

I take strong exception to the insubordinate tone of your signal and your repeated attempts to usurp authority of the Headquarters. Communications couched in terms such as the one under reply are to cease forthwith.⁵⁴

Bostock also took 'strong exception' in his reply:

I also have responsibilities. You do not understand current Allied air and R.A.A.F. Higher Organisation in accordance with which I am responsible to Commander, Allied Air Forces, and not, repeat not, subordinate to you for the discharge of the duties incumbent upon my appointment. I do, and will continue to take the strongest exception to your unwarranted and uninformed interference.⁵⁵

From the other side of the world, Bruce was making his final pleas to Curtin to provide answers for the points Sinclair raised, telling the PM that the Air Ministry was unable to proceed with Park's proposed placement until the Australian position was resolved.⁵⁶ Curtin, however, had accepted MacArthur's advice and abandoned Park's appointment, telling Bruce while the appointment would have been beneficial to the RAAF "it would now appear inadvisable to proceed with it."⁵⁷

While Curtin was prepared to accept MacArthur's advice, it would appear other politicians and some senior public servants, employed by the Department of Defence, had opposite views. Shedden discussed the matter further with Chifley, who described the PM's abandonment of the CAS appointment as defeatist.⁵⁸ W.V. Quealy's⁵⁹ opinion was the appointment of an RAF officer should have proceeded because it would have resulted in a well-organised RAAF, which was essential for Australia's post War defence.⁶⁰ In the

⁵⁴ G. Odgers Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945. p. 436.

⁵⁵ G. Odgers Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945. p. 437.

⁵⁶ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin, 12 Oct 1944.

⁵⁷ NAA M2740/10/1/200. Cablegram from Bruce to Curtin, 23 Oct 1944.

⁵⁸ D. Horner Defence Supremo. p. 217.

⁵⁹ William Vincent Quealy OBE was a career public servant who was Assistant to the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council between 1941 – 46. He remained with the Department of Defence through his career, eventually reaching the position of Deputy Secretary in 1963.

⁶⁰ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Note for Secretary. 17 Oct 1944.

absence of a strong commitment from his political masters, Shedden took it upon himself to plan for future RAAF leadership. When Air Commodore J.P.J. McCauley was posted to Britain (to replace Bladin who returned to Australia as DCAS), Shedden asked Bruce to ensure that RAAF officers, sent to Britain in the future, would be placed in positions in the RAF where they would gain operational experience.⁶¹

The replacement plans were brought to an end on 31 October 1944 when Curtin told Bruce that it was inadvisable to seek Park's appointment.⁶² Shedden confided his views of the episode to paper and his opinions reflect the underlying arguments in favour of appointing an RAF officer. In Shedden's opinion MacArthur's statement that the appointment was entirely a matter for the Australian Government should have been conveyed immediately to Bruce, because this advice would have negated the need for Sinclair to ask the series of questions on Park's position relative to MacArthur, Kenney et al. Without questioning the motives, Shedden noted MacArthur had blocked the appointment of either Longmore or Joubert and then "had apparently repented of his agreement to Air Marshal Park, which was made with the Prime Minister in Brisbane." Quite correctly, Shedden concluded MacArthur's objections were irrelevant to the Australian Government's main consideration, which was the desire to have the RAAF's internal administration and operational effectiveness placed on a satisfactory basis. Shedden correctly surmised the management of the RAAF would continue to be unsatisfactory until a change was made. He summed up the situation in a prophetic statement:

⁶¹ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Letter from Shedden to Bruce. 19 Oct 1944. McCauley served with the RAF's Second Tactical Air Force in Europe in 1944 – 45. He was CAS between 1954 and 1957.

⁶² V. Orange Sir Keith Park, p. 194.

Someday there will be an outcry about the relatively poor R.A.A.F. effort in the Southwest Pacific Area in relation to the resources allotted to the air effort. It is not the fault of the personnel in the squadrons, who are magnificent, but is due to the set up, under which it has been necessary to send some officers to Europe to get operational experience which should be provided in the Southwest Pacific Area.⁶³

It is to be regretted Shedden's political masters did not regard the situation with the same clarity.

⁶³ NAA A5954/1/238/1. Minute on file by Shedden. 4 Nov 1944. "Higher Organisation of RAAF."

VI

AN AUSTRALIAN IN RAAF BLUE

The RAAF was not the only air force to experience personality clashes within its high command during the Second World War. General Erhard Milch, for example, had numerous disagreements with other Luftwaffe commanders such as Udet, Kesselring and Jeschonnek¹; while during the Battle of Britain the upper echelons of the RAF's Fighter Command clashed over the best means to deploy their aircraft in combat. However, the argument that underlies the Jones – Bostock feud, that of operations versus administration seems to have been resolved in the other major air forces. For example, in the United States at the outset of the Pacific War H.H. Arnold was promoted to Lieutenant General and was made responsible only to the US Army Chief of Staff. In this situation, Arnold was allowed to act as the Chief of Staff for the Air Forces, with control over his own budget. He was able to control not only the building up of the air forces but also how they were used operationally. He was also able to appoint or dismiss senior officers.²

The Jones – Bostock feud caused problems for many of the RAAF's senior officers who took sides in the conflict and found themselves at odds with their comrades. One can only imagine the effect on individual officers' morale as a result of the feud and being placed in situations where they observed first hand, or were inadvertent parties to, the conflict. Group Captain W.H. Garing occasionally found himself in situations where he had to deal with both Jones and Bostock on the same matter. When he arrived at

¹ W.J. Boyne Clash of Wings. pp. 29-30.

RAAF Command the first thing Bostock would ask him was “What’s Jones got to say?” When Garing returned to Melbourne, Jones would ask him “What has Bostock got to say?”³ Air Commodore Scherger found himself in a similar situation when he visited mainland Australia. When visiting Brisbane he stayed at accommodation provided by RAAF HQ Forward Echelon and when he visited RAAF HQ the first question Jones would ask him was “where did you stay in Brisbane?” Jones was always happy with Scherger’s reply. When Scherger returned to the operational area he stayed at RAAF Command HQ and he found the situation very difficult:

This business of tightwire walking was most uncomfortable. I didn’t like it, I don’t suppose anybody liked it really, but it did make life very difficult for me indeed, particularly when I went back to take over from Cobby.⁴

Other officers also would have found themselves in similar unreasonable and embarrassing positions where they were asked by either Air Vice-Marshal to inform on his rival.

Government indecision on matters relating the RAAF’s high command caused problems for Jones’ own morale and health. He found the problems of the divided command and dealing with Bostock and Kenney very stressful and frustrating and several times considered resigning from the CAS position. He believed, however, any officer selected to replace him would have been placed in the same invidious position because he believed Curtin and Drakeford would never appoint Bostock as his replacement.⁵ Such a

² R.J. Overy *The Air War 1939 – 1945*. Stein & Day, New York, NY, 1981. pp. 80-81. G Perret *Winged Victory*. Random House, New York, NY, 1993. p. 143.

³ Comments made by Air Commodore W.H. Garing following the presentation of Dr John Mordike’s paper *RAAF Organisation, Command and Politics* in J. Moredike (ed) *The Home Front, Mainland Australia and the Southwest Pacific Area 1939 – 1945*. p. 20.

⁴ NLA TRC121/52 *Recorded Interview with Sir Frederick Scherger*.

⁵ G. Jones autobiography. p. 85.

belief suggests Jones considered Bostock to be wholly the cause of all problems associated with the divided command. While Jones appears to have been aware of his personal shortcomings he does not seem to have realised that another officer in the CAS position may have taken a different approach and established a good working relationship.

Another consequence of the feud was a discontent in the management of the Service, which permeated to all levels and in one instance Jones found himself having to deal with a very senior officer who took it upon himself to speak out against the RAAF. To put this particular incident and its outcome into perspective we first need to look at an Allied command initiative in another theatre of the War.

Air Command South East Asia

The Air Command South East Asia (Air CSEA) was established in 1943 and comprised the RAF's command, operational and administrative units in India, Burma and Ceylon. In January 1944, Jones advised Drakeford of Air CSEA's formation and proposed the RAAF post an officer of appropriate seniority to India for six months, as an accredited observer to the Air CSEA staff. This officer would be tasked with acquainting himself with the organisation and operational plans of the command; studying tactical methods employed in the theatre; and reporting his findings to the Air Board. Jones asked Drakeford to support the proposal and wrote that the officer would be selected and posted as soon as support was received.⁶ Drakeford gave his support but referred the proposal to Curtin.

⁶ NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from CAS to Minister "Appointment of R.A.A.F. Officer to Staff of Air Command, S.E.Asia." 12 January 1944.

Curtin argued the proposal had a direct relation to the operational set up in the SWPA and because of this it should be referred to MacArthur for his concurrence.⁷ It appears the proposal was then deferred until November 1944, when Jones reactivated it by informing Drakeford that RAAF Command had planned to send a liaison officer to Air CSEA. Jones opined it was desirable for RAAF HQ to appoint its own accredited representative to Air CSEA. He told the Minister “The information obtained by the officer concerned, if so appointed, on matters which are the responsibility of R.A.A.F. Command would, of course, be passed direct to that formation.” Jones’ view was that one officer could take care of the needs of both RAAF HQ and RAAF Command and he sent the Minister a copy of a message from GHQ SWPA (received via RAAF Command) stating that no objection had been raised to the appointment of an observer to Air CSEA.⁸ The acting Prime Minister, F.M. Forde, concurred with the proposed appointment. Now all that remained was to appoint a suitable officer.

It did not take long before the opportunity to appoint a ‘suitable’ officer presented itself. Coincidentally, about the same time as the Air CSEA was being discussed, Jones was investigating some disturbing accusations made against one of his Service’s senior officers. He received an anonymous letter dated 14 November 1944, which described the disgraceful conduct by the Air Member for Personnel (AMP), acting Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole, at the general meeting of the RAAF HQ mess on 9 November. The letter stated the meeting was being properly conducted until Cole, apparently quite inebriated and “for reasons known only to himself decided to address the meeting.” The letter went on:

⁷ NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from Curtin to Drakeford. 7 March 1944.

⁸ NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 21 Nov 1944.

Events lasting some two hours which followed were unbelievably poor and in such bad taste that the 600 of your headquarters staff officers present will never till their dying day forget the pitiful sight of an Air Vice-Marshal whom we owe obedience and respect so drunk that he could only stand with difficulty. Indeed such conduct would even be classed as indecent amongst the dregs of the community. The effect of such behaviour in the minds of so many of all ranks up to Air Marshal could never be measured and the damage done to the RAAF and in particular the Air Board can never be repaired. Had it been a junior officer his dismissal from the Service would have taken place before now.

The anonymous informant stated that Cole showered abuse and humiliation on the most respected and senior officers. The abuse was interspersed with unintelligible rambling. The writer concluded with the pertinent comment “As a permanent officer, and I might say that I am speaking for the multitude, our permanent service has been turned into a farce. I will leave service at War’s end. Is it any wonder we are being openly laughed at?”⁹ A copy of the letter was also sent to Forde who passed it to H.P. Lazzarini, the acting Minister for Air, for investigation:

in view of the serious nature of the statements made, which reflect so discreditably upon an officer holding a very important appointment in the R.A.A.F., that you should have enquiries made as to their validity.¹⁰

Following Lazzarini’s instruction, Jones quickly undertook an investigation into the matter, cautioned Cole and reported back to the Minister:

I desire to place on record having had occasion to warn the above mentioned officer against a repetition of certain conduct which took place at a General Mess Meeting at Ormond Hall on 8th November, 1944.

Jones reported the meeting had been attended by nearly all RAAF HQ officers with Group Captain Radford in the chair. There was some disagreement over procedures for the election of the mess committee for 1945 and Cole took it upon himself to take over

⁹ NAA M2740/1/259. Copy of anonymous letter dated 14 November 1944.

¹⁰ NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from Forde to Lazzarini.

the chair. Jones could not say that Cole was drunk but, “he was incapable of thinking sufficiently clearly to carry out his task.” He concluded that Cole’s conduct was not such as to warrant a charge. Nevertheless he had probably lost considerable prestige and “this is liable to affect, to some extent, the discipline of the Service.”¹¹

Jones’ report, naturally enough, caused some confusion for the Minister who was unable to reconcile the statement that Cole may not have been under the influence but was incapable of thinking. Lazzarini also questioned the wisdom of only giving Cole a warning when it was claimed his actions were liable to affect discipline. The Minister pointed out the duties of AMP included responsibility for the administration of business relating to personnel, discipline and individual training. Against this background he should have set and maintained the disciplinary standard and conducted himself in an appropriate manner. Therefore in light of the reported incident Lazzarini doubted the wisdom of keeping Cole as AMP.¹²

Jones now found himself in a very difficult position. He made further enquires but found the officers who were present were reluctant to make any statement on the incident (that is, officers of a lower rank were not prepared to speak openly and criticise the conduct of an Air Vice-Marshal). Therefore it was difficult to determine Cole’s culpability even though it was obvious the sense of discipline of some officers at RAAF HQ had suffered severely as a result of the incident. Jones’ remedy was to remove Cole and replace him with Lukis, an officer whom Jones considered had suitable experience for the Air Board position—“Air Commodore Lukis formerly held the appointment of

¹¹ NAA M2740/1/259. Report from Jones to Minister “Report on Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole.” 23 November 1944.

¹² NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from Lazzarini to Jones “Report on Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole.” 29 November 1944

A.M.P. and carried out these duties to my satisfaction and, I believe, to the satisfaction of the Minister.”¹³ Lazzarini also received advice on the matter from Langslow who agreed with Jones’ recommendation and added that if any disciplinary action was to be taken against Cole, then charges should have been laid against him and the case tried by court martial, as soon as possible after the incident. A court martial would have been difficult because of the publicity aspects and the reluctance by officers to make any statement on the incident (Langslow noted the difficulty Jones encountered in collecting information during his investigation into the matter). The possibility of sending Cole on extended leave was also ruled out as, “he would resent the action and seek redress or the fullest inquiry, to which he would be quite entitled.” Therefore Langslow agreed the changes in appointments seemed the best under all circumstances.¹⁴ RAAF Headquarters then had the problem of what to do with Cole. Jones came up with a solution and Lazzarini was able to report to Forde that Cole would be posted overseas:

having regard to his experience on operations and tactics, both in Australia and overseas, he be appointed to the newly created post on the staff of Air Command, South East Asia.¹⁵

Aircraft Supply

One of the main activities of RAAF HQ during the Second World War, Jones wrote later, was acquiring more aircraft for the Service that would be, by 1945, the world’s fourth largest air force.¹⁶ However, this was not a simple task of approaching aircraft manufacturers with a shopping list. The major problem Jones faced with aircraft

¹³ NAA M2740/1/259. Top Secret minute from Jones to Minister “Report on Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole”. 13 December 1944.

¹⁴ NAA M2740/1/259. Top Secret minute from Secretary to Minister. 20 December 1944.

¹⁵ NAA M2740/1/259. Minute from Lazzarini to Forde “Proposed changes in higher appointments in the R.A.A.F.” 20 December 1944.

acquisition related to the government agendas of other Allied powers, namely the United States and Britain. While Australian industry was turning out training aircraft such as the Wirraway, Wackett and Tiger Moth as well as Beaufort and Boomerang combat aircraft, there was a need for the very latest types of combat aircraft and transports and these were not forthcoming in necessary quantities. The RAAF's acquisition problems revolved around the predetermined direction of overall Allied strategy and we should take a brief look at that in order to understand the problems Jones faced.

The first part of the strategic planning that impacted on the RAAF occurred on the other side of the world, in December 1940 (a year before the US entered the war), when President Roosevelt and his advisors agreed to a strategy known as 'Beat Hitler First.'¹⁷ Put simply this meant that the largest part of the military resources of the US and Britain would be allocated to defeating Germany before Japan.

The second problem area dated back to June 1942, when the policy for Dominion air requirements was agreed by the US and British combined Chiefs of Staff. This agreement meant it was the duty of the US Chiefs of Staff to determine the strategic requirements of the Dominions (ie British Empire member countries and colonies), located in the US spheres of responsibility, all within the overall framework of the 'Beat Hitler First' strategy. Therefore, aircraft allocations for the SWPA were determined by the chief of the USAAF—Lieutenant General H.H. Arnold—and Australia had no direct representation in the decision making process.¹⁸ Arnold and the RAF CAS, Air Chief

¹⁶ G. Jones *Australia's Shield and Spear* in *Aircraft*, April 1951. p. 21.

¹⁷ J. Robertson *Australia and the 'Beat Hitler First' Strategy, 1941-42: A Problem in Wartime Consultation* in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*. Vol XI, No 3, May 1983. pp. 300-321.

¹⁸ General Arnold noted, in his memoirs, "The Australians wanted to have the same representation on the Combined Chiefs of Staff as the British. Had that been sanctioned, the Combined Chiefs would have become too unwieldy to do business. The stand had to be taken that the Combined Chiefs of Staff

Marshal Sir Charles Portal, also agreed all Australian aircraft requests would be first assessed by the US Chiefs of Staff and then would be referred to their British counterparts. This, in theory, was to ensure the RAAF was given a 'square deal.' In practice this was not to be the case, as we shall see when the RAAF attempted to acquire heavy bombers.

Alan Stephens notes that Portal and the British government had an agenda of their own for RAAF aircraft acquisition (especially heavy bombers), which related to Australia's commitment to aircrew training. Under EATS, Australia had provided a large number of aircrew to the RAF (16% of that Service's personnel were Australian) and the RAF wanted to retain these personnel. Portal's view was that if the RAAF were supplied with heavy bombers then Australian Service personnel would be diverted from the RAF (either they would be recalled from Britain or retained in Australia) to crew these aircraft—to the detriment of the RAF.¹⁹ The simple solution was the fewer the aircraft allocated to the RAAF, the fewer aircrew the Service would need. From Portal's point of view it was logical to oppose the allocation of bomber aircraft to the RAAF.

The US had their own motives for ensuring the RAAF was under equipped, largely based around two of General MacArthur's mind sets—to ensure all credit for victory in the Pacific was given to himself and to US forces; and his initial poor opinions of Australians. These ideas were conveyed to Generals Arnold and Kenney. General Arnold's own opinion was simply that Australia was part of the British Empire and so

would continue as it was originally organized.” H.H. Arnold Global Mission. TAB Books, Blue Ridge Summit, PA, 1989. p 289. Given the state of the RAAF's command structure one wonders who the Australian Government would have nominated to represent the Service had Australian participation been agreed.

¹⁹ Alan Stephens *Nobbled by our powerful friends* in The Canberra Times. 16 Oct 1999.

when he needed an opinion on the RAAF's aircraft needs he would consult Portal and not Jones (or any other RAAF officer).²⁰

It was against this background that Jones set off to the US in late 1943 to attempt to acquire aircraft. We may wonder how much he knew of all the political forces working against his Service at the time. On 30 December 1943, in the company of Group Captain F.W. Thomas (Director of Tactics and Operational Requirements), Jones flew from Brisbane to the United States. The whole trip took over a month and included visits to Washington DC, Dayton Ohio, Los Angeles California, London and Ottawa. Jones went to attend the conferences which would decide upon the allocation of aircraft for the RAAF for 1944. He also wanted to ensure that the promise of 475 aircraft, given by President Roosevelt to Dr Evatt, during 1943, would be fulfilled.²¹

Jones and Thomas initially planned to travel to the US with Kenney. Unfortunately, their aircraft was delayed on the long flight between Melbourne and Amberley and when they arrived at the Queensland airport they found that Kenney had left on an earlier flight. They proceeded by themselves and after meeting up with Kenney at Canton Island continued the trip aboard a USAAF Douglas C-54.

The conference to discuss the RAAF's aircraft allocation took place in Washington DC on 5 January 1944. In addition to Kenney, the meeting was attended by Major

²⁰ Alan Stephens *Nobbled by our powerful friends*.

²¹ NAA A816/1/37/30/232 *Report by Chief of Air Staff on visit to USA and UK, January 1944 (Allocation of Liberator aircraft). Report on Visit by Chief of the Air Staff and Director of Tactics and Operational Requirements. To United States of America and Great Britain. January 1944. Written by the Chief of Air Staff for the Minister for Air. 5 February 1944. p. 1.* In his report Jones noted it was acknowledged at the conference that the dive bombers sent to the RAAF (as a result of representations made to the US Government by H.V. Evatt) in 1943 (Vultee A-35 Vengeance) were of little value and were given to Australia as there was no bid for them by the USAAF nor the RAF. See also G. Jones autobiography. p. 105. Jones was not a supporter of dive bombers. He considered the whole concept of building an aircraft specially to be a dive bomber to be wrong (despite the Luftwaffe's success with the Junkers Ju 87). In his view dive bombers were unsuccessful in the SWPA because they could not

General Giles (General Arnold's chief of staff); Air Marshal Sir William Welsh (head of the RAF delegation); and Air Marshal Richard Williams. Owen Dixon, the Australian Ambassador to the US, assisted the Australian delegation.

The conference outcome was both good and bad for the RAAF, as Jones succeeded in gaining agreement to the allocation of 33 Lockheed PV-1 Venturas; 47 Consolidated PB-5A Catalinas; three Martin PBM-3 Mariners; and 118 Curtiss P-40N Kittyhawks. Jones ran into problems with acquiring transport aircraft. He was unable to gain additional Douglas C-47s to equip two new squadrons but he was able to secure 36 of the type as wastage replacements for existing squadrons. However, owing to the agreements associated with aircraft allocation, his work did not end there.

Jones next met with Arnold who advised him the RAAF would need British approval before the aircraft could be supplied.²² In addition there were a few other difficult issues to be resolved. Jones was advised that all types of aircraft were in short supply and the European Theatre of Operations (ETO) had the higher priority. General Arnold confirmed this advice and added he was not prepared to release aircraft to the RAAF because USAAF training units needed large numbers of contemporary combat types. Arnold claimed aircraft supply problems would not be resolved during the course of the war. The main reason being, Arnold logically explained, was while large numbers were produced there were frequent changes in aircraft types and combat tactics so that manufacture was always one step behind the front line requirements and a saturation point for suitable aircraft types was never likely to be reached.²³

carry a heavy bomb load and they were too slow to be used as fighters. NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones.

²² G. Jones autobiography. p. 108.

²³ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p.2

By far the biggest problem Jones experienced was the difficulty in obtaining assurances heavy bombers would be provided. Kenney and Welsh supported the RAAF's acquisition of this type of aircraft but at the same time advised they had requirements of their own.²⁴ Giles, however, had another agenda and approached the conference with instructions that nothing was to be done which would in any way detract from a maximum effort in Europe during the first half of 1944.²⁵ Giles advised Williams that Arnold had asked Portal of his opinions on the RAAF's acquisition of heavy bombers. Portal's reported response was, "nothing must be done to detract from the effort in Europe nor reduce Australia's personnel commitment to the Royal Air Force."²⁶ The RAAF was in the extraordinary situation of competing with the RAF for the supply of aircraft and also for Australian aircrew.

Nevertheless, Jones had some success with his negotiations as it was agreed the RAAF would receive 150 Consolidated B-24 Liberators between July and December 1944. In addition, six ex-Fifth Air Force B-24s would be handed over to the RAAF at the earliest possible opportunity, so that RAAF ground and aircrew training on the aircraft type could begin immediately. Jones still was not satisfied with this arrangement because it would delay the formation of heavy bomber units by up to 12 months:

I could not regard this as satisfactory and decided to visit England in an endeavour to obtain a number of the RAF allotment in the first six months of this year.²⁷

Before he left the US, Jones looked into a project that was of considerable interest to him—the manufacture of the North American P-51 Mustang in Australia. During

²⁴ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p. 1.

²⁵ Alan Stephens Power plus Attitude. p. 76.

²⁶ Alan Stephens Power plus Attitude. p. 76.

discussions with Major General Eccles (Controller of Aircraft Production) he confirmed the production contracts had been signed. Jones was told that despite a few delays, the shipping of information and production equipment from the US to Australia was proceeding and, most importantly, there was no major difficulty to hinder Australian Mustang production. This was the most advanced aircraft construction project undertaken in Australia up to that time.

Jones and Thomas, accompanied by Welsh and Giles, flew to the UK via Newfoundland and Iceland aboard a USAAF C-54. The time in Britain was spent in a series of meetings with government officials and senior RAF officers. During the nine days there, Jones spoke with Portal, Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Courtney (the Air Member for Supply), Air Marshal Sir Peter Drummond (the Air Member for Training), the Secretary and Under-Secretary of State for Air and members of the Air Council, as well as the Australian High Commissioner Stanley Bruce.

In discussions with Portal, Jones explained one of the main reasons for acquiring the B-24s was to provide the RAAF with an effective long-range strike force. Another reason centered on Service prestige—the Fifth Air Force was carrying out, what he described as, spectacular raids and as a result it was gaining great publicity. This, he claimed, was having a demoralising effect on the RAAF, which was unable to carry out similar operations due to a lack of suitable aircraft. While Portal was sympathetic to the RAAF's situation, he advised Jones the RAF needed aircraft for the bombing campaign on occupied Europe and also for use against U-boats.²⁸ Regardless of the RAF's needs,

²⁷ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p. 2.

²⁸ The B-24 Liberator, with its long range turned out to be the ideal aircraft for the RAF Coastal Command to use against the U-boats, which during the early years of the Second World War had wreaked havoc on Allied shipping. The B-24 was able to undertake convoy escorts and anti-U-boat

an agreement was reached with Giles, and Jones succeeded in gaining 18 B-24s, which were to be delivered to the RAAF between March and June 1944. In addition, Jones was given an assurance for the delivery of 50 Mosquito aircraft during the second half of 1944 to supplement local production of that aircraft type.²⁹

In his discussions with senior RAF officers, Jones was advised of other matters relevant to the British aircraft industry. On the subject of aircraft production, Jones was told British bombers were being produced at a rate of 250 aircraft per month. In his report to Drakeford, he commented that this was little more than sufficient to make up for wastage while at the same time US industry was turning out 1,200 bombers per month. These production figures did not seem to bother the British Secretary of State for Air who told Jones he was convinced the war in Europe would end soon:

It is confidently expected, however, that Germany will be forced out of the war not later than the autumn of 1944, and that there after, all available forces will be sent against Japan.³⁰

At a meeting with Drummond to discuss the supply of aircrew for the RAF, Jones was advised that the RAF had considerable personnel reserves and as a result the RAAF could retain those personnel needed in Australia. This was contradictory to the advice he had received earlier from Portal.

Before he departed the UK, Jones visited four RAAF Article XV squadrons (three flying Avro Lancasters and one equipped with Mosquito fighter bombers. The Article XV squadrons were established under the terms of the EATS agreement, supposedly as

operations over most of the North Atlantic and into areas of ocean that were previously beyond the range of the RAF's other long range maritime patrol aircraft – the Lockheed Hudson and the Short Sunderland. W.J. Boyne Clash of Wings. p. 199.

²⁹ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p. 4.

³⁰ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p. 2.

Australian units within the RAF.) He briefed squadron personnel on contemporary conditions in Australia. When reporting back to Drakeford he commented on the morale of the Australians and noted the desire on the part of some members of the ground staff to return to Australia as soon as possible.³¹ One suspects the ground staff were unhappy with their lot in life, as the majority (Europe and Pacific based) did not remain with the Service after the War ended. This situation does not seem to have been fully appreciated by Jones when he drew up initial plans for the post War RAAF.

The three-day return flight to Washington was via Morocco, French West Africa, Brazil and the West Indies. Before making his way back to the US west coast, Jones flew to Ottawa where he met with Goble and the Australian High Commissioner. Back in the US, Jones was given the opportunity to view new aircraft types when he visited the USAAF base at Dayton, Ohio and factories in Los Angeles, California. Aircraft types he was shown included the Boeing B-29, the Douglas A-26, “the jet propulsion fighter [probably the Lockheed P-80] and a very large Civil Transport being manufactured by Lockheed.”³²

In addition to his progress with aircraft acquisition, Jones reported back to Drakeford on a few other things that he had observed while overseas. He reported conditions of service for RAAF personnel in Canada appeared to be uniformly good and he had visited the RAAF headquarters in London and Washington and found the administrative work up-to-date and records maintained in a satisfactory manner (despite this, he made recommendations for additional staff at both sites). Senior officers at these HQs had proposed that WAAAF personnel should be posted there to provide clerical support or to

³¹ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p. 4.

work as drivers. It was claimed that such an initiative would serve a double purpose of “improving the morale of our own men in these areas, and would provide valuable publicity, bearing in mind their distinctive uniform.”³³

Finally there was an observation, made overseas, which caused concern. Jones reported the lack of publicity given to RAAF activity. In the UK the press recorded the operations of the RAF and Royal Canadian Air Force but referred to the RAAF and RNZAF as Dominion air forces. Similarly the US press referred to non-American air forces as Allied forces. Jones argued, “While it is not suggested that we should compete for publicity, the prestige of Australia warrants justifiable recognition.”³⁴

In the meantime, back in Australia, Curtin briefed representatives of the press on 19 January 1944, and told them Jones and Kenney were in the US on aircraft related matters. The PM summed up the situation quite simply by advising that some of the aircraft delivered to the RAAF were not in accordance with specifications; and because of operations in other parts of the world, promised aircraft had not been forthcoming. Furthermore, he said, with every offensive in other theatres, aircraft allocation to the RAAF declined and so Jones and Kenney were trying to rectify the situation.³⁵

On his return to Australia Jones forwarded his report of the acquisition negotiations to the Air Board and to Curtin. Shedden asked, on behalf of the PM, what assurances had been given to obtain the aircraft. Jones commented “I had much pleasure in replying that I had given no assurances what so ever.”³⁶

³² NAA A816/1/37/30/232. Jones added that details of these aircraft were not included as part of his report but would be supplied if and when required.

³³ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p. 5.

³⁴ NAA A816/1/37/30/232. p.5.

³⁵ C. Lloyd & R. Hall Backroom Briefings. John Curtin's War. pp. 188-189.

³⁶ G. Jones autobiography. p. 110.

The trip was very successful and stands out as one of Jones' achievements during the Second World War. The RAAF received new aircraft during the course of 1944. The first of 321 Curtis P-40 Kittyhawks from the 1944 production run was delivered to the RAAF in May 1944. Delivery of these aircraft continued until February 1945.³⁷ However, it was with another type of aircraft Jones acquired that Jones introduced a new capability into the RAAF.

Bomber Acquisition

One area of acquisition that deserves special mention is that of heavy bombers. As we have seen the RAAF's attempts to gain a strategic bombing force came to fruition during 1944. In addition to Jones' negotiation skills, it was also made possible through the US industry's ability to mass produce vast amounts of military materiel and through the Australian War Cabinet's decision in November 1943 to have the Department of Aircraft Production construct the Avro Lancaster heavy bomber in Australia.³⁸ It was to be several years, however, before Lancasters were scheduled to roll off the Australian production lines and so the RAAF needed an interim heavy bomber. This aircraft turned out to be the Consolidated B-24 Liberator.

The B-24 was one of the three heavy four engine bombers used in large numbers by the USAAF during the Second World War (the other two were the Boeing B-17 Flying

³⁷ S. Wilson The Spitfire, Mustang and Kittyhawk in Australian Service. Aerospace Publications, Sydney, NSW, 1988. pp. 178-181.

³⁸ NAA A705/1/501/533 *Acquisition of heavy bomber aircraft from overseas*. Minute from Jones to Drakeford, 1 August 1944. As the Lancaster was to be produced in Australia and was likely to be flown by the RAF in the Pacific Theatre, Jones recommended the RAAF acquire a flight of four aircraft to gain experience in their use. He requested the aircraft be supplied with fully trained crews, ground staff and spares and be funded in a similar manner to the Spitfires. They would be attached to the RAAF's heavy bomber wing. Alan Stephens Power plus Attitude. p. 80. John McCarthy notes that it was proposed that the RAF would have ten squadrons of Lancasters based on Okinawa. J. McCarthy A Last Call of Empire. p. 126. In so far as Australian production was concerned, the war ended before construction began and the Lancaster's successor, the Avro Lincoln, was built by GAF at Fishermans

Fortress and the Boeing B-29 Superfortress). The B-24 was produced in greater numbers than the other two, even though the B-17 was the aircraft more favoured by the European based Eighth Air Force. This preference resulted in the availability of greater numbers of B-24s for the Allied forces in the Pacific.³⁹

As we have seen, Jones succeeded in gaining agreement for the allocation of B-24s to the RAAF. The next step was to determine how they were to be used. Kenney proposed that, as there was a surplus of B-24s emerging from the Ford Motor Company's production line at Willow Run,⁴⁰ the RAAF should form seven bomber squadrons. Kenney could then transfer the USAAF's 380th (H) Bombardment Group from the NWA, (where it operated under Australian direction), and move it north with the Fifth Air Force while the newly formed RAAF squadrons could take over the Group's role in bombing targets in the NEI.⁴¹ The RAAF went ahead forming heavy bomber squadrons so by late 1944 the Group's role had been largely met by the Australian units. The 380th (H) Bombardment Group, however, remained in the NWA until mid January 1945 when they were ordered to join the Fifth Air Force units in the Philippines.⁴²

Jones estimated the RAAF needed to acquire 226 heavy bombers, sufficient to equip seven squadrons and an Operational Training Unit (OTU).⁴³ Initially ten ex-USAAF B-24Ds were supplied to the RAAF (and were flown at Tocumwal) while crew training was

Bend. S. Wilson Lincoln, Canberra and F-111 in Australian Service. Aerospace Publications, Weston, ACT, 1989.

³⁹ C.G. Kenney General Kenney Reports. p. 214. Up until the B-29 became available, the B-24 was the one Allied heavy bomber suited to the Pacific War because of its long range capability.

⁴⁰ Despite Henry Ford's fanatical anti-Semitism and his opposition to the war in Europe, partially because he believed it was part of a conspiracy against himself and his company, the Ford Motor Company built 8,685 B-24s at their Willow Run plant. D. Sherman *Willow Run* in Air & Space. Vol. 7, No. 3. August/September 1992. pp. 74–84.

⁴¹ G.C. Kenney General Kenney Reports. p. 341.

⁴² M.V. Nelves Tocumwal to Tarakan. p. 64.

undertaken with USAAF B-24s at Nadzab, New Guinea.⁴⁴ In May 1944 the first of the new model B-24Js were delivered from the production lines to the RAAF. Jones' negotiations in London and Washington paid off, as the RAAF would eventually receive 287 Liberators in different versions during 1944 and 1945.⁴⁵ The RAAF retained a bomber capability up to the present day.

Morotai

An organisational change to the AAF occurred on 15 June 1944, when Kenney announced the formation of the Far East Air Force (FEAF), which comprised the USAAF's Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces. As a result of the FEAF's formation, the AAF then comprised RAAF, NEI, RNZAF and RAF units, although USAAF units could be assigned to it whenever necessary. Kenney commanded the FEAF and retained command of the AAF. The formation of the FEAF allowed MacArthur to move the AAF into a secondary role. That is, the FEAF moved northward with the Allied advance as part of the force designated to invade the Philippines and eventually Japan. The AAF was tasked with continuing the fight against Japanese troops who had been bypassed by the advance and remained in the NEI and in the British colonies on Borneo.⁴⁶

Three months later, on 14 September 1944, Curtin met with Bostock to discuss the RAAF's participation in future forward offensive operations in the SWPA (such as the Borneo campaign) as well as its commitments to mopping-up operations and air garrison

⁴³ NAA A705/1/501/533. Minute from CAS to Allied Air Force HQ, 9 June 1944. The RAAF squadron establishment for heavy bomber units was 12 aircraft.

⁴⁴ NAA A705/231/9/1251 *Establishments General—Heavy Bomber Squadrons*. Minute from Jones to D of T, June 27, 1944. It was decided the training of B-24 crews should take place in an area similar to that in which they were to fly. Darwin was considered unsuitable while Nadzab in New Guinea was more appropriate. NAA A705/1/501/533. Notes of meeting June 30, 1944. General Kenney confirmed that up to 28 RAAF crews per month could be trained at Nadzab. Jones agreed to 120–150 RAAF ground staff being provided to assist with maintenance of the aircraft used by the RAAF.

⁴⁵ RHS *Record Card – Airframes, Aero Engines and Mechanical Transport*. Consolidate Liberator A72.

duties in the re-occupied territories. The PM advised Bostock of the following principles for the use of the RAAF, which were to be followed when Bostock was making recommendations or tendering advice to the Commander AAF:

- (a) RAAF operational squadrons were still assigned to MacArthur and he would decide on their employment;
- (b) So far as the Australian Government was concerned, the RAAF's first requirement was to provide adequate air support for Australian land forces;
- (c) When major Australian land forces were stationed in operational areas in contact with the enemy, RAAF air cover was to be available to them to the greatest extent practicable;
- (d) For the purposes of co-operation with Australian land forces in future offensive operations in the SWPA, it was desirable that an RAAF Tactical Air Force (TAF) was to be maintained as an integrated formation of such strength as was practicable; and
- (e) Mopping-up and air garrison duties in British and foreign re-occupied territories would be undertaken after the other duties were satisfied.

Curtin told Bostock that if circumstances prevented the retention of the integrated TAF, every effort was to be made to ensure the RAAF was represented within the AAF by individual wings or even by separate squadrons in the advance against Japan. Bostock advised the PM that the strength of the TAF might fluctuate in accordance with the RAAF developmental program and the overall AAF commitments from time to time, but

⁴⁶ Alan Stephens Power Plus Attitude. pp. 68 - 69

he was committed to maintaining an integrated formation of not less than six fighter squadrons and three attack squadrons.⁴⁷

Despite being away from the main areas of fighting and the direct advance to Japan, the operations in Borneo, conducted by elements of the RAN, the Australian Army and the RAAF were seen, at the time, to be a major task for the Australian forces. Before the campaign started, however, an incident took place on Morotai Island that was one of the all-time low points in the RAAF's history. In order to discuss the incident we should first look at the reason why many RAAF units came to be based on Morotai.

As part of the overall strategic campaign to support MacArthur's return to the Philippines, a large number of AAF units were moved to Morotai Island in the Halmahera group of islands. Morotai is located 24 km north-east of Halmahera Island. It is a small island, measuring 72 km north to south and 34 km east to west. It was largely covered by mountains and forests although there was a flat piece of land at the southern end where the AAF established two air fields at Wama and Pitoe.⁴⁸

The Allied forces started to build up Morotai as a major military base soon after they invaded the island in September 1944. This move was vital for MacArthur's campaign because the two airfields gave the FEAF's bombers the opportunity to conduct operations over the Philippines and to disallow Japanese naval vessels the use of the important Celebes Sea and Macassar Strait.⁴⁹ The Australian units, however, were late to arrive on the scene and the Philippines invasion had been underway for one month before the first

⁴⁷ A5954/810/2 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meetings*. 18 September 1944. (3804) Future Employment of RAAF in Southwest Pacific Area.

⁴⁸ J.R. Grant *End of the Line* in *FlyPast* No 210, January 1999. p. 37.

⁴⁹ G. Odgers *Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945*. pp. 248 – 249.

RAAF units (apart from the Airfield Construction Squadrons) arrived on Morotai.⁵⁰ The Australian forces used the island as the base for the Borneo operations and so Bostock set up an advanced headquarters for RAAF Command there. In addition, the First Tactical Air Force (1st TAF) RAAF had its headquarters there, as did the USAAF Thirteenth Air Force.⁵¹

It appeared to many Service personnel when they reached Morotai, that the Australian forces had been left behind in the advance to Japan. Instead of being directly involved in the important fighting in the Philippines, the Australians encountered an unpleasant state of affairs that involved a combination of geography, climate and operational issues that led to a serious decline in morale especially among the fighter pilots.

When the RAAF and Australian Army personnel arrived on Morotai they found it to be a miserable place. Conditions were crowded⁵² and unhygienic; unpaved roads and open spaces were either dust or sticky mud, depending on the weather. Personnel were housed in tents and there had even been shortages of these so other forms of uncomfortable makeshift accommodation were erected. The Australian food supplied to the RAAF and Army was, when compared to US rations, unpalatable and dreary. To add to the RAAF personnel's unhappiness was another problem—transportation to and from the Island, or the lack of it. This meant that the personnel sent to the island remained there, regardless of the length of their posting because transportation was not available to take them back to Australia or to bring in replacements. Because of this and other operational needs, tours of duty in the combat areas had been extended in duration,

⁵⁰ J. Robertson *Australia at War*. p. 167.

⁵¹ G. Waters *OBOE – Air Operations Over Borneo 1945*. APSC, Canberra, 1995. p. 9.

⁵² RHS *RAAF Units at Morotai*. The RAAF had 98 different units based on Morotai between 15 September 1944 and 10 July 1948.

especially for ground staff and many personnel had not been granted home leave for over two years.⁵³ As well as the discomforts, there was the awareness that the decisive actions of the Pacific War were now being waged almost exclusively by the US forces. All these conditions fed an element of discontent among RAAF personnel, which was exacerbated by the behaviour of some senior officers who preferred socialising to their Service duties.⁵⁴

One other big problem for the Australian commanders on Morotai was the illegal trafficking in alcohol, conducted by Australian Service personnel. Unlike their Australian counterparts, the local US forces had no issued alcohol ration. They did, however, have money and access to better rations, equipment and other materiel. Each Australian was issued two bottles of beer per week (when it was available) and this ration, together with other alcohol illegally imported on to the island, was easily sold to the US service personnel in exchange for either money or materiel. While the senior Australian officers attempted unsuccessfully to stamp out the trafficking, other RAAF officers were flying bottles of alcohol to the island aboard Service aircraft.

The main RAAF unit on Morotai was the First Tactical Air Force (formed on 25 October 1944), which comprised fighter, attack and transport units, all under the command of Air Commodore Scherger, a capable and highly regarded officer. Unfortunately Scherger was injured in a motor accident and Jones replaced him with Air

⁵³ H. Rayner Scherger. AWM, Canberra, 1984. p. 85.

⁵⁴ Alan Stephens Power Plus Attitude. p. 72.

Commodore Cobby, a less popular officer. Jones claims Kenney and Bostock opposed the appointment only on the grounds that Cobby was “too old”.⁵⁵

In addition to the discomfort caused by the climate and over crowding, RAAF aircrew were starting to experience morale problems that related to their operational tasks. While aircrew flying attack and transport aircraft were kept busy, the units that suffered the biggest morale problems were the fighter squadrons equipped with Spitfires, which were underemployed. These particular aircraft, which had achieved legendary status in Europe, proved to be quite unsuitable for operations in the SWPA. They were designed as an interceptor fighter for use over the UK and later over Europe but their range was inadequate for operations in the SWPA and they had numerous mechanical problems some of which could be traced back to the unsuitability of the Rolls Royce Merlin engine to tropical conditions.⁵⁶ When the Spitfire Wing (comprising 79, 452 and 457 Squadrons) reached Morotai the pilots found the opportunities for air to air combat with Japanese aircraft had disappeared. Instead of being used as interceptor fighters, the Spitfire’s role was transformed to ground attack—a role for which the aircraft was not designed.

The fact that RAAF units would not be accompanying the US forces in their reconquest of the Philippines contributed to the serious discontent experienced by the Spitfire pilots. Matters reached a head when eight fighter pilots (including Group Captain Clive Caldwell – the RAAF’s highest scoring fighter ace during the Second World War) presented Cobby with identically worded resignations of their RAAF

⁵⁵ Jones papers *Difficulties with Senior Officers*. A.H. Cobby was a year older than Jones and Kenney and two years younger than Bostock. Interestingly Jones does not record any adverse comments that Kenney or Bostock might have made about Cobby’s leadership capabilities.

⁵⁶ For a detailed account of the Spitfire’s earlier role in defending northern Australia, refer to P.N. Helson *The Forgotten Air Force*.

commissions—an action Jones described as “absurd”⁵⁷ and as only a gesture because officers cannot resign during wartime.⁵⁸

Cobby informed Bostock of the resignations and the AOC met with the pilots. He asked them to tear up their resignations, which they refused to do, although they agreed to change the wording as to when the resignation would come into effect. Bostock then sent a signal to RAAF HQ outlining the situation; stating that morale in the 1st TAF was dangerously low and recommending the transfer of Cobby and two other officers—Group Captains Gibson and Simms. Bostock requested Air Commodore Scherger be sent as a replacement for Cobby.

When the signal reached RAAF HQ Jones immediately departed for Morotai, which he reached on 25 April 1945. Jones then spent the next few days interviewing each of the pilots who had “resigned” (except Caldwell) separately. The pilots were unwilling to disclose the full extent of their discontent to CAS, but Jones was told that each was dissatisfied with the activities conducted by the 1st TAF.⁵⁹ Jones believed that Kenney and Bostock should have been aware of the situation that had led to this discontent. Nevertheless he used the situation to air his views on how the RAAF’s operational areas should be managed in future.

Jones told one pilot, Squadron Leader R. Gibbes, during the interview “I realise this thing is very serious. I have come up here to straighten it out. I don’t care whose corns I tread on in doing so.” After listening to Gibbes’ grievances Jones, who was obviously concerned about how the situation had been allowed to develop, added “I realise that a lot

⁵⁷ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. Interviewed by Fred Morton c1976.

⁵⁸ G. Jones autobiography. p. 93.

of senior officers have outlived their usefulness and that pilots with operational experience have not been used as they should have been. In future the policy will be to put men with operational experience in jobs which they are fitted to.”⁶⁰ In another interview, Group Captain W. Arthur asked Jones “You’re the Chief of the Air Staff, why don’t you go into MacArthur’s office, thump the table and demand to be taken on [as part of the advance to the Philippines]?” To which Jones replied “Well I don’t know how far you’d think I’d get if I did that, since our Prime Minister’s done his utmost already.”⁶¹ The following day Arthur approached Jones with a ‘profit and loss’ statement he had drawn up, which showed the results obtained in attacks on Japanese ground targets, balanced against the RAAF’s pilot and aircraft losses.⁶² Before Arthur had explained the ‘profit and loss’ statement, Jones was advised that Kenney had arrived from the Philippines to meet with Bostock and Generals Blamey and Moreshead to discuss air support for the forthcoming Borneo operations. On hearing of problems Kenney demanded to speak with the seven pilots.⁶³ There are two versions of the meeting with the pilots—Jones’ and Kenney’s. Not unsurprisingly they differ in reporting what may have happened next. One certain thing is that it was at this point relations between Jones and Kenney reached their lowest level. Jones initially questioned the US General as to

⁵⁹ NLA MS 2505/12/517 *Inquiry into Allegations Relating to Trading in Liquor and Kindred Matters in the First Tactical Air Force and the Northern Area of the Royal Australian Air Force*. J.V. Barry, Commissioner. Referred to for the remainder of this chapter as the Barry Report. p. 138

⁶⁰ R.H. Gibbes *You Live but Once*. R.H. Gibbes, 1994. p. 233.

⁶¹ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. By 1944 MacArthur was frequently declining to use Australian troops for anything other than ‘mopping up’ operations. This attitude left the Australian Government and Defence leaders perplexed. The Australian Government offered MacArthur the 7th and 9th Divisions for use in the Philippines “as an acknowledgment of American assistance to Australia.” MacArthur refused the offer and even planned to keep Australian troops out of the forthcoming Operations Olympic and Coronet (the invasion of the Japanese home islands), until the Joint Chiefs of Staff forced him to include them. T.B. Allen & N. Polmar *Codename Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan*. Headline, London, UK, 1995. p. 161.

⁶² NLA Barry Report. p. 138. G. Jones autobiography. p. 93.

⁶³ G. Odgers *Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945*. pp 445 – 446.

why he wanted to see the pilots. Kenney replied he still had operational control of the RAAF's tactical units and he was conducting a tactical inspection of the pilots' efficiency, including morale and this was none of Jones' business.⁶⁴ CAS told Kenney he could not see the pilots and then, after Kenney threatened to request through MacArthur to Curtin to have Jones sacked (and replaced with someone who would co-operate), sent word that he would accompany the pilots when the American spoke with them. This could be regarded as an empty threat on Kenney's part because we know he and MacArthur had opposed Jones' replacement on several occasions and rejected officers nominated by the Australian Government. It would be unlikely that Drakeford would support a move to replace Jones and its likely he or Langslow would have reminded the PM of the failed attempts in the past. Furthermore, given the view that the US commanders wanted the RAAF divided to ensure they could keep the Service in the background during the advance against Japan, it would not be in Kenney's favour to have a CAS who would co-operate with him and Bostock. Nevertheless the threat serves to demonstrate how bad the situation had become between the two officers.

When he met with the Australian pilots, Kenney patronisingly suggested that they had become "war weary".⁶⁵ He then told them there were times during wars when personnel became dissatisfied or thought they were wasting their time. He described the progress of the War and said that there were a lot of people tied up in areas where it was necessary for them to continue attacks on enemy forces whose usefulness appeared to be outlived. During his talk he asked Group Captain Arthur how many operational tours he had

⁶⁴ Extract from General Kenney's diary provided by Mr Ric Pelvin of the AWM, 18 February 1999. It could easily be argued that morale was a personnel issue and as CAS was the officer with the final responsibility for RAAF personnel it certainly was Jones' business! In that scenario the 'mutiny' was an administrative issue and thus was no business of either Kenney or Bostock.

completed and whether he had lost any weight. Jones interrupted to explain that Arthur had been burnt in an aircraft crash. Arthur took exception to the interruption because it implied he had become tired of operational flying. Arthur explained to Kenney that neither he nor his comrades were tired; they were not complaining about the efficiency of the RAAF, nor were they complaining about their role. Instead they were complaining about the way in which they were carrying out that role and their grievance was an internal one with the RAAF. Gibbes told Kenney that the Spitfires were being wasted on Morotai and, as they were the best fighter aircraft in the world, they should be in the front line of operations. Kenney upset the pilots even further by replying he had been against the Australian Government purchasing Spitfires because in his opinion they were unsuitable for operations in the SWPA.⁶⁶ After this negative statement, Kenney asked the pilots to “take back their badges”. The meeting ended when they refused.⁶⁷ Kenney had achieved nothing by addressing the pilots other than to upset them further. It would be reasonable to think that some of the problems on Morotai existed because of a deficiency in communications. That is, Bostock had not communicated to the Spitfire squadrons details of the Prime Minister’s directive that the RAAF’s role was to support the Australian Army. If this was the case it makes Kenney’s interference in the mutiny not only unnecessary but also potentially embarrassing for the RAAF Command HQ.

Jones claims another heated discussion started after Kenney had finished with the pilots. He turned on Jones and said “evidently you don’t trust me. You had to come into the tent and sit down here and listen to everything I had to say.” Jones quite correctly replied it was a disciplinary matter and had nothing to do with Kenney. At this point

⁶⁵ R.H. Gibbes You Live but Once. p. 234.

⁶⁶ R.H. Gibbes You Live but Once. p. 235.

Jones thought the American was going to hit him and claims “I was quite ready for him.”⁶⁸ One can only guess the impact on the demoralised pilots of seeing the two senior officers involved in a punch-up. After the meeting Arthur, without Jones knowledge, spoke again with Kenney, but again gained no satisfactory resolution to his and the other pilots grievances.⁶⁹

Kenney advised Jones against planing disciplinary action against the pilots, stating he would appear as a witness for the defence and would not be restrained in what he told the press about the causes of the mutiny.⁷⁰ Kenney then got Jones and Bostock together. He told Jones to replace Cobby with Scherger and he placed Bostock in charge of the air component of the Tarakan operation and told him to “be ashore with the ground troops.”⁷¹ Kenney then returned to the Philippines, where on 30 April 1945, he welcomed members of the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force (MEAF), who had just arrived and were to fight alongside the USAAF in the American re-conquest of the country.⁷²

Jones took remedial action and after reporting the matter to Drakeford, he put in place moves to transfer Cobby together with Group Captains Simms and Gibson and Squadron

⁶⁷ NLA Barry Report. pp. 138 – 139.

⁶⁸ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. G. Jones autobiography. p. 95.

⁶⁹ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. NLA Barry Report. pp 139 – 140.

⁷⁰ We might suspect this was another empty threat by Kenney. It would be highly unlikely he would take valuable time away from his command of the FEAF to attend a court martial (which most probably, would be conducted over a long period at a site remote from the major area of conflict, such as Melbourne). It is doubtful that either he or MacArthur, both moving further away from Australia and intent on the invasion of Japan, would have shown any concern for eight pilots in a foreign air force. This belief is reinforced by an examination of the records kept by J.V. Barry. It appears Kenney was not interviewed by the Judge, nor did he make any representation to Barry’s inquiry. One expects if he was concerned about the fate of the pilots he would have gone out of his way to make his views known to Barry. One also wonders exactly what Kenney would have told the media as to the causes of the mutiny – would he have admitted to the US policies of excluding the RAAF from the major campaigns in the later war years?

⁷¹ Extract from General Kenney’s diary. One might question what right Kenney had to give orders to Jones.

⁷² S. Flores *To Join the Allies* in Air Enthusiast 46. Key Publishing Pty, Ltd, Stamford, Lincs, UK, 1992. p. 4.

Leader Harpham from their appointments.⁷³ He then re-appointed Air Commodore Scherger as AOC 1st TAF. Regardless of Jones' quick response to Kenney's directions there was some delay in Scherger's arrival and Cobby remained with the 1st TAF and went to Tarakan during the early stages of the Borneo operations. As soon as Scherger arrived on Morotai, he set to work on improving morale and developing better relationships between senior Army and RAAF officers.⁷⁴ Jones' reaction to the mutiny (ie the replacement of senior officers and discussions with the pilots) was perhaps the best course of action. Obviously it was a situation that should not have been allowed to develop and we may ask why the AOC RAAF Command was so out of touch with the feelings of officers under his command and what representations he had made to Kenney concerning the opportunities for RAAF participation in the re-conquest of the Philippines and the Allied advance towards Japan.

Regardless of Kenney's threats, Jones and the Air Board did not allow the mutiny to end there. Rather than hold a court martial (and have the potentially embarrassing presence of the Commander AAF speaking on behalf of the 'mutineers') Jones returned to Melbourne and reported what he had seen on Morotai to Drakeford. He recommended that an inquiry, headed by a judge be set up.⁷⁵ Drakeford agreed but it was decided to turn attention from the mutiny to other infringements of law and discipline and on 24 May 1945, the Minister announced he had set up an inquiry into allegations of liquor trading and kindred matters in the 1st TAF. Heading the inquiry was Justice J.V. Barry. Under the terms of his commission he was required to inquire whether the resignations were associated with the alcohol trafficking, or with the 1st TAF's operational activities

⁷³ RHS Barry Report. *Report of Proceedings taken at Melbourne, Friday 27th July 1945.*

⁷⁴ H. Rayner Scherger. p. 88.

between 1 November 1944 and 19 April 1945.⁷⁶ Barry set to work, interviewing 107 people in Melbourne and on Morotai, including Jones, Bostock, Gibbes and Arthur. During his interview, Bostock took advantage of the inquiry to level further criticism against RAAF HQ by stating that the RAAF HQ staff on Morotai were incompetent, arrogant and generally unhelpful.⁷⁷

On 27 July 1945 Barry interviewed Jones, who advised that the resignations were unrelated to the divided command structure—Jones' view was the pilots were dissatisfied with the operational role assigned to the 1st TAF and, to a lesser extent, the manner in which they had been dealt with by the 1st TAF's senior officers.⁷⁸ Jones believed each pilot was quite sincere, but misguided, in what they were attempting to do and they had acted out of a rather exaggerated sense of national duty.⁷⁹ The inquiry might be seen as a vindictive act on the part of Jones and the Air Board, in that it was set up as a means of punishing the officers involved in the mutiny. However, there is another issue to consider here. That is, trafficking in alcohol was illegal and if Jones turned a blind eye to it and allowed it to continue he would have been condoning it through his failure to take action. In this case his actions were correct but the timing of the inquiry, so soon after the mutiny, tends to overshadow its purpose.

Barry's report of his findings to Government was in two parts—alcohol trafficking and the resignations. When dealing with the resignations, Barry found that the matter

⁷⁵ RHS Barry Report. *Report of Proceedings taken at Melbourne, Friday 27th July 1945*.

⁷⁶ NLA MS2505/12/585. Letter from Barry to Jones, 12 July 1945.

⁷⁷ RHS Barry Report. *Report of Proceedings taken at Melbourne, Friday 27th July 1945*.

⁷⁸ RHS Barry Report. *Report of Proceedings taken at Melbourne, Friday 27th July 1945*. When giving evidence to the Commission, Jones stated it was not the first time he had encountered discontent amongst RAAF personnel. He claimed that when EATS was at its height and after the outbreak of the Pacific War, officers who were retained at training establishments and at RAAF HQ became unhappy because they preferred to be engaged in operations.

⁷⁹ NLA Barry Report. pp. 151 - 152

was not one which should have been brought to Kenney's notice. Rather it was a domestic matter which should have been confined within the RAAF.⁸⁰ He further found that as RAAF HQ had no control over the operational role assigned to the 1st TAF, it could not be held responsible for that role nor the manner in which the 1st TAF carried out its operational activities. He concluded that Arthur's resignation came from a high sense of duty and a desire to correct defects he believed existed in the RAAF.

Barry determined there was widespread discontent among Morotai based RAAF personnel and he suspected this was a partial result of the Jones-Bostock feud. He reported that the RAAF was suffering from the disastrous command decision made in 1942 and neither Jones nor Bostock were the men to make the best of the bad arrangements. Barry also noted a bad relationship had developed between the RAAF and the Australian Army units on Morotai. As noted earlier, Scherger set out to improve this relationship as soon as he arrived on Morotai.

Although Barry's report vindicated Arthur and his 'profit and loss' statement, it brought no discernible change to the RAAF, aside from an improvement in conditions on Morotai.⁸¹ Apart from Caldwell, the other pilots remained on Morotai and continued to fly on operations supporting the Borneo Campaign.

The Borneo Campaign

While MacArthur's US forces pushed on through the Philippines, Allied war plans were also directed towards clearing Japanese forces from the territory they occupied in the Southwest Pacific Area, which had been by-passed in the main advances. These operations, code named *Montclair*, were aimed towards the re-occupation of the Visayan

⁸⁰ NLA Barry Report. p. 138.

– Mindanao – Borneo – Netherlands East Indies area and planning for them began at GHQ on 25 February 1945. One part of *Montclair*, a series of operations named *Oboe*, had as its objectives to recapture Java; to destroy the Japanese forces in the NEI; to re-establish the Dutch government; and to establish a base for subsequent operations against the Japanese throughout the area. *Oboe* comprised six components (*Oboe 1 – 6*), which were planned to be six distinct operations. *Oboe 1* was to take Tarakan Island; *Oboe 2* was directed at Balikpapan; *Oboe 3* was directed at Bandjormasin; *Oboe 4* was to be staged at either Surabaya or Batavia; *Oboe 5* was directed at the whole NEI; and *Oboe 6* was to take British Borneo. Only *Oboe 1, 2 and 6* actually came to fruition before the end of the war.⁸² Tarakan was selected as the target for the first Allied attack, which was to be a series of amphibious landings by Australian troops, supported by Naval and AAF elements.

Tarakan is a small island forming part of the delta area of the Sesajap River in north east Borneo. The island was an important target because it was a source of oil for the Japanese and, when occupied by the Australians, it would serve as a base for operations against other *Oboe* objectives. The amphibious landings at Tarakan started on 1 May 1945 (P-Day).⁸³

The pre-invasion aerial bombardment of the island was largely undertaken by units of the Thirteenth Air Force and a small number of RAAF aircraft. In early April 1945, 15 B-24s from 21 and 24 Squadrons RAAF arrived on Morotai and flew operations with the USAAF's XIII Bomber Command. Their task was to bomb targets on Tarakan and nearby Borneo during the lead up to the invasion. For 17 days prior to P-Day, B-24s

⁸¹ J. Robertson *Australia at War 1939 – 1945*. p. 169.

⁸² D. Wilson *Always First*. APSC, Canberra, 1998. p. 81.

from the 42nd Bombardment Group, B-24s from the 5th and 307th Bombardment Groups, fighters from the 18th and 347th Fighter Groups and RAAF Beaufighters attacked buildings, jetties, air fields, barracks and oil storage tanks on Tarakan.⁸⁴

As well as the intensive aerial activity, in the four days leading up to the landing, the invasion area on Tarakan had been subjected to a naval bombardment. This was because it was feared that some 7,000 Japanese troops were entrenched in the vicinity of the invasion area and would inflict heavy casualties on the Australian troops.⁸⁵ During this time the bombing raids were also flown against anti aircraft positions, supply dumps, barracks, warehouses and coastal defense positions. The continual bombing of the defensive positions on the invasion beaches (near Lingkas on the south west side of the Island) forced the Japanese to withdraw inland before the invasion began. Consequently there was very little resistance in the opening phases of the invasion.⁸⁶

On the day of the invasion the USAAF P-38 fighters and medium and heavy bomber aircraft carried out their raids successfully but the RAAF's B-24s did not appear over the island. Bostock, to his embarrassment, later found out that after the invasion fleet had sailed from Morotai and radio silence was in force, RAAF HQ had sent a signal to the B-24 squadrons, ordering them to stop flying because they had reached their allocated number of flying hours, on which their maintenance schedules were based. So instead of

⁸³ M.V. Nelmes Tocumwal to Tarakan. Banner Books, Belconnen, 1994. p. 107.

⁸⁴ M.V. Nelmes Tocumwal to Tarakan. p. 107. Craven W.F. and Cate J.L. The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume Five; The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki. June 1944 – August 1945. University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 1965 pp. 463 – 464.

⁸⁵ Alan Stephens The Australian Centenary History of Defence; Volume II. The Royal Australian Air Force. pp. 120 – 121.

⁸⁶ G. Waters Oboe: Air Operations Over Borneo 1945. pp. 33 – 34.

supporting the invasion of Tarakan, the RAAF's heavy bombers were grounded for maintenance.⁸⁷

The ship on which Bostock and MacArthur were commanding the operation was also maintaining radio silence and thus the message from RAAF HQ was not received. When the RAAF B-24s failed to appear, Bostock was humiliated and was later to comment "If I could have been a three-penny bit and fallen through a crack in the boards on the deck I would have been thankful."⁸⁸ When Bostock later explained the incident to Kenney, the American could only offer his sympathy.⁸⁹ In his official report on the *Oboe* campaign, Bostock wrote:

In my opinion it is inexcusable to allow consideration of routine maintenance procedure of this nature to preclude the employment of aeroplanes in operations in support of a beach head.⁹⁰

The following day (2 May 1945) an RAAF B-24, which had been tasked for aerial observation duties over Tarakan, also failed to appear for the same reason. Bostock was incensed and again reported:

Such inflexibility of effort is intolerable and could have caused acute operational embarrassment had enemy ground opposition been more severe.⁹¹

⁸⁷ M.V. Nelmes Tocumwal to Tarakan. p. 107. G. Odgers Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945. p. 457. Alan Stephens The Australian Centenary History of Defence; Volume II. The Royal Australian Air Force. p. 121. One wonders however, whether the RAAF's contribution to the bombing on P-day would have really made a great deal of difference to the opening phase of the campaign. We know that only 15 B-24s had been tasked to support *Oboe I*, compared to the three USAAF Bombardment Groups (usually comprising four squadrons per Group) and two fighter groups. The tonnage of bombs that could be delivered by USAAF aircraft was obviously far greater than that by the RAAF. Despite the large number of B-24s acquired by the RAAF, Bostock chose to deploy a very small number of the aircraft to directly support the invasion. Perhaps the non appearance of the B-24s did more to offend Bostock and the reputation of the RAAF than it harmed the invasion troops.

⁸⁸ Comments by Mrs Beryl Daley following the presentation of the paper by Alan Stephens titled *RAAF Operational Commanders*, later published in Alan Stephens (ed) The RAAF in the SWPA 1942 – 1945. APSC, Canberra, 1993. p. 48. Mrs Daley was Kenney's secretary.

⁸⁹ Alan Stephens The Australian Centenary History of Defence; Volume II. The Royal Australian Air Force. p. 121.

⁹⁰ G. Waters OBOE – Air Operations Over Borneo 1945. p. 20.

The Tarakan invasion is not one of the high points of Jones' time as CAS, because of the grounding of the bomber squadrons. We should give this incident further examination and consider some of the alternatives available to RAAF HQ. If the B-24s were grounded because Jones used the maintenance schedules as a means to discredit Bostock in the eyes of MacArthur and Kenney, then he should be condemned as a small minded person who put personal anger and spitefulness ahead of the lives of Australian Servicemen. In this case Drakeford should have removed him from the CAS position and replaced him.

If, however, Jones genuinely believed that the aircraft should have been grounded for maintenance it shows a total lack of awareness of operational needs and an inability to plan ahead on his part. These are not the characteristics possessed by a man who claimed to be a good administrator. RAAF HQ had, in the past, kept close control over the B-24's flying hours and there were other courses Jones could have taken to ensure that aircraft were available to support *Oboe 1*. The scheduled maintenance for aircraft can be changed to fit around the Service's operational requirements⁹² and one would expect that Jones who was aware of the invasion plans, could have directed limited flying be undertaken in the weeks preceding the invasion so that the maintenance would be required after the main part of the invasion was successfully completed. Similarly he could have ensured the necessary maintenance was undertaken prior to the invasion. If it was absolutely essential that the aircraft had to receive maintenance at the time of the Tarakan invasion, Jones could have advised RAAF Command and arranged the temporary deployment of other NWA based B-24 squadrons to support the invasion.

⁹¹ G. Odgers Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945: Air War Against Japan 1943 – 1945. p 457.

A Very Busy War

After reading the preceding accounts of the ongoing conflict, one might be forgiven for thinking that Jones' time during the Second World War was largely taken up by his feud with Bostock. This of course is incorrect. We have seen that Jones oversaw the RAAF's top-level decision making body—the Air Board—as its chairman. He also spent a considerable amount of his time away from RAAF HQ, visiting RAAF establishments located in Australia and, as the war progressed, other parts of SWPA. Generally Jones made one trip per month that took him around Australia or to New Guinea. These trips varied in duration of anywhere between one and two weeks.

2 September 1945

The Second World War ended following the detonation of two atomic bombs over Japan during August 1945. MacArthur was designated Supreme Commander for the Allied powers to accept, co-ordinate and carry into effect the general surrender of the Japanese forces. In addition to MacArthur, representatives of other Allied nations signed the surrender documents on behalf of their governments. After some negotiation, it was agreed an Australian delegation, headed by Blamey would attend the ceremony and he would be the Australian signatory. To accompany him, Blamey nominated Bostock and Major General F.H. Berryman, (the Chief of Staff, Advanced Land Headquarters). The Australian Government approved Blamey's nominations and added two of its own—Commodore Collins and Air Vice-Marshal Jones.⁹³

⁹² Discussions with Squadron Leader Graeme Swan at Russell ACT. 14 June 2003.

⁹³ P. Hasluck Australia in the War of 1939 – 1945. The Government and the People 1942 – 1945. AWM, Canberra, 1970. pp. 596 – 598. Air Commodore R.J. Brownell was initially nominated by the Government to attend as it was thought that Jones would not be able to reach Tokyo in time for the

On 2 September 1945, Jones was one of the hundreds of military personnel aboard the *USS Missouri*, in Tokyo Bay, who were there as representatives of their countries or Services at the surrender. The trip to Japan was not a pleasant one for Jones, although, no doubt, he was extremely happy at the prospect of peace. He made the long flight to Manila aboard his 'personal' Lockheed Hudson (A16-120). Unfortunately, soon after his arrival he suffered from a bout of influenza and was confined to his hotel room for four days, unable to eat anything other than chicken soup. The remainder of the trip was aboard a crowded ship and Jones, still recovering from his illness, was confined to a diet of ice cream. The diet must have been a good remedy because Jones had recovered by the time the ship docked in Yokohama.⁹⁴

In his autobiography Jones gives no indication about how he felt on the historic occasion. A contemporary account, however, reported that attending the surrender ceremony was Jones' ("an Australian in R.A.A.F. blue") proudest hour "It was the hour for which he and the R.A.A.F. had been born. For the war against Japan was the R.A.A.F.'s first great trial of strength. And now he, as its chief and its representative at this historic moment, felt pride in the way it had acquitted itself during those years of war."

Jones, it was reported, returned to Melbourne convinced that the Japanese should never again be given the chance to wage war. He hoped Australians would realise they had an extraordinary escape from any real bomb damage and would take steps to ensure the country never again faced the dangers that had been present in the war. In his view "Maintenance of adequate air defences in the years to come is the surest way that safety

ceremony. Brownell was replaced by Jones when it was found that there was time for him to complete the journey.

can be guaranteed.”⁹⁵ The account went on to quote his views on the recently vanquished enemy:

The Japanese have been cowed for the time being, but their spirit has not been broken. They may endeavour to regain their strength for a further attempt to enforce their Greater East Asia Co-prosperity plan upon the world. Only rigid control by the Allies can keep their ambitions in check.⁹⁶

Soon after the war ended the Australian Government rescinded the agreement that handed over operational control of RAAF units to General MacArthur and the Air Board resumed control of the whole Service. With the cessation of hostilities, operational control of RAAF units reverted to RAAF HQ and on 2 September 1945 RAAF Command was disbanded in Brisbane. It was replaced by a unit known as Advanced RAAF Headquarters.⁹⁷ Jones now became CAS of a unified Service. The day Japan surrendered, operations ceased to be the RAAF’s priority and the Service’s activities became more directed towards administrative tasks.

Jones’ next major task would be to dismantle the Service that was the source of his pride and to rebuild to a structure that would reflect its role in a changed world.

⁹⁴ G. Jones, autobiography. p. 115.

⁹⁵ F. Doherty *The End of the Conflict* in RAAF Directorate of Public Relations *Victory Roll*. AWM, Canberra, 1945. pp. 11 – 12.

⁹⁶ F. Doherty *The End of the Conflict*. pp. 11 – 12. This account made no mention of Bostock’s attendance at the surrender ceremony.

⁹⁷ AWM54/81/4/143 “Expansion of RAAF Organisation and Administration Part 1. Higher Organisations and Command ‘Brief’ of Command Organisation RAAF 1939 – 1945”

VII

THE MEANEST PIECE OF SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

Australia ended the Second World War with an extremely powerful air force, which stood “as testimony to the remarkable administrative and organisational achievement of Chief of Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal George Jones and his colleagues.”¹ By October 1945, the Service possessed 5,585 aircraft, was staffed by 173,622 personnel placed in 570 different units, which were located around Australia and the SWPA.² In addition there were thousands of Australian air and ground crew serving with the RAF in other parts of the world. The RAAF also had vast amounts of equipment and other materiel in depots located on the Australian mainland and islands that stretched from Bougainville to Borneo. Jones himself looked back on this achievement with pardonable pride.³

Jones and the Air Board were now faced with two enormous tasks—demobilising the Service and building up an air force for the post war world. The first task started almost straight away. Jones realised the Service had more personnel than it needed by the time the war in Europe ended but he could not begin downsizing because other Air Board members were loath to reduce the RAAF’s size until Japan was defeated.⁴ Rather than wait for this to happen, the Federal Government started on an initiative directed towards rationalising the three Services’ personnel establishments and on 20 June 1945, Drakeford announced in Parliament the formation of the War Establishment Investigation Committee. W. Slater, a Melbourne barrister and a member of the Victoria State Parliament, chaired the Committee. Assisting him were Gerald Packer (a former RAAF officer) and Group Captain A. Richards, the RAAF Deputy Director of

¹ Alan Stephens *Demobilisation and the Interim Air Force* in J. Moredike (ed) The Post War Years: 1945 – 1954. APSC, Canberra, 1997. p. 3.

² Alan Stephens *Demobilisation and the Interim Air Force*. p. 4.

Organisation.⁵ The Committee's task was to examine the non-operational parts of the three Services. Specifically it was to: review internal organisations and methods to determine more economical means of undertaking Defence related tasks, review proposals for the creation of new units or branches, review personnel numbers and ranks, and investigate whether Service staff should be military or civilian personnel.⁶ The Committee worked on these tasks for the next three years, so their work was undertaken in parallel with the RAAF demobilisation. Jones had, by the time of Drakeford's announcement, endorsed a plan to withdraw RAAF personnel from Europe.⁷

Demobilisation

Three days after the end of the Pacific War, the War Cabinet directed all three Services to implement demobilisation plans as soon as possible.⁸ The RAAF's rapid demobilisation was a significant achievement for the Service's senior managers and in some ways was a task as great as building up the Service during the War years. We might expect that Jones would have played a significant part in managing the demobilisation process. Following receipt of the War Cabinet directive, Jones endorsed a plan to cease RAAF recruiting and to identify and release all surplus personnel. However, it had been decided between Drakeford and Langslow, prior to the end of the war, that the Air Member for Personnel and his branch at RAAF HQ would be "the one primarily responsible for the demobilisation of the Air Force."⁹ Hewitt, who had been acting AMP, was permanently appointed to the position. This left Jones free to concentrate on other

³ AWM MSS 0738. *Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir G. Jones, KBE, DFC.*

⁴ Jones papers *The Demobilization* [sic] *of the R.A.A.F.*

⁵ CPD Representatives. 20 June 1945. p 3334.

⁶ C.D. Coulthard-Clark. *Edge of Centre*. pp. 72 - 73.

⁷ NAA A1196/36/501/589 *Reduction of the R.A.A.F. in S.W.P.A. from 53 Squadrons. Organisation and Planning. 1945 – 46.* Minute from Jones to AMP. 30 July 1945.

⁸ NAA A5954/815/2 *Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting.* 17 August 1945, Minute (4351).

tasks. We would expect that a person who prided himself on his administrative ability would have capably managed demobilisation or at least shown great interest in its progress. Jones was, however, content to allow Hewitt and his staff to have carriage of the process while his attention was largely focussed on the RAAF's future structure. This did not mean that he did not have some sympathy for the young men and women who had served in the RAAF since they left school but for whom there was no longer a job within the Services:

I had faced the same situation in 1918, and I would have only had to recall the state of my own mind at that time, to appreciate the difficulties of the men whom I now had the obligation to 'off load.'¹⁰

I can well understand the heart burning of the younger men who had the R.A.A.F. figured out as their only home; the only life they had known since school, and the traumas which resulted.¹¹

Jones acknowledged the role Hewitt played in this difficult task and his remarkable success:

In one year the service [sic] was reduced from approximately 125,000 men and 17,000 women to about 7,000 all told. This remarkable result was mainly due to the efforts of the Air Member for Personnel, Air Commodore JE Hewitt, who organised and controlled this activity.¹²

Hewitt was assisted in his task by other officers, including Group Captain Richard Kingsland—an officer with a distinguished operational career, who provided an insight into the process. Kingsland found dismantling the RAAF to be a difficult task, with many agonising decisions to be made. For example, the closure of RAAF bases in country areas might mean the economic ruin for nearby towns, so all manner of local financial and social issues had to be considered before it was decided which bases would be closed. Nevertheless, Kingsland found it interesting and challenging work and he found it strange that someone in Jones' position took

⁹ NAA M2740/1/68(1). Minute from Langslow to Drakeford "Appointment of Air Member for Personnel." 24 August 1945. In his autobiography Jones incorrectly claims he personally appointed Hewitt to oversee demobilisation. G. Jones autobiography. p. 120.

¹⁰ AWM MSS 0738. *Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir G. Jones, KBE, DFC.*

¹¹ Jones papers *The Demobilization* [sic] of the R.A.A.F.

very little interest in the demobilisation process. In making important decisions, Kingsland had to rely on his own judgement and ability and received no guidance from the top, stating “Jones was of no use what so ever as my chief.” There were numerous problems to be solved, which should have been challenging and exciting tasks for CAS. Instead such problems were an annoyance to Jones and discussions between himself and Kingsland were few and fruitless.¹³ Kingsland experienced some frustrating and unpleasant dealings with Jones, the worst of which was when Jones suggested that Kingsland was responsible for a series of leaks to the media on the RAAF’s demobilisation plans. Kingsland eventually tired of the frustration of dealing with a disinterested CAS and resigned from the RAAF.¹⁴

Another officer whose work was also met by a lack of enthusiasm from Jones was Gerald Packer,¹⁵ who was a member of the Slater Committee. Drakeford had a high regard for Packer’s abilities and considered his very wide and lengthy experience of Air Force matters made him suitable to work with the Committee.¹⁶ Jones, however, took an opposing view. He was unimpressed with the Committee and its membership, especially Packer, who he described as someone:

Who had always been a troublesome officer and on this committee he lived up to his reputation. He was a great believer in time and motion studies for the performance of all work. He wrote all the reports for this committee and

¹² Jones papers *The Demobilization* [sic] *of the R.A.A.F.*

¹³ Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland of Campbell, ACT. 12 September 1999. To make matters worse, Hewitt noted that Jones, for unknown reasons, had developed some sort of animosity towards Kingsland. J.E. Hewitt *Adversity in Success*. p. 300. Kingsland had served on Bostock’s staff at RAAF Command HQ in the position of SIO. It is possible that Jones distrusted Kingsland because he had worked closely with Bostock. AWM 54/81/2/4. *R.A.A.F. Command Order of Battle. January 1942/44*. “Commanders and Senior Staff Officers within R.A.A.F Command”

¹⁴ Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland. After leaving the RAAF, Kingsland began a long and very successful career in the Commonwealth public service, which saw him rise to the office of Secretary of a Federal Government Department.

¹⁵ Gerald Packer had been OC of Forward Echelon in Brisbane for some time during the Second World War. He had left the RAAF before the Slater Committee was formed.

¹⁶ CPD Representatives. 20 June 1945. p 3334.

endeavored to show that the tasks of the stores depots, repair workshops and other units could be done with much fewer men.¹⁷

Jones was also less than happy with Packer's time in the Service but realised there was little he could do because Packer had influence with the politicians:

On one occasion when serving with 1st Tactical Air Force he attempted to cancel the orders of his commanding officer because he disagreed with them. Nevertheless he was highly regarded by Langslow, the Secretary, Dept of Air and also by Drakeford the Minister.¹⁸

Packer conducted various management efficiency studies relevant to personnel numbers required for various tasks within the restructured post War Service. Jones dismissed Packer's work, claiming the people who actually did the work were puzzled by his conclusions.¹⁹ We may wonder whether Jones also dismissed Packer's work because CAS was uneasy with contemporary management methodology.

Regardless of Jones' role, demobilisation went ahead at a remarkable rate. There was, however, one area in which he played an important part. That is, while others were dealing with downsizing the whole of the Service, some of Jones' time was occupied with one particular aspect—resolving the RAAF's high command situation. As the RAAF shrank in terms of personnel, squadrons and aircraft numbers, it would be reasonable to expect there would not be the need in the Interim or post war Air Force for the same number of senior officers that the wartime Service possessed. Regardless of such reasoning, one of the more controversial aspects of the Service's reorganisation during this period was the forced retirement of certain senior officers, shortly after the end of the war. This move should not have come as a surprise to the senior RAAF officers because Prime Minister Chifley announced the direction for senior appointments in all three Services in December 1945. During a press interview he stated that it

¹⁷ Jones papers *The Demobilization* [sic] of the R.A.A.F.

¹⁸ Jones papers *The Demobilization* [sic] of the R.A.A.F.

was considered desirable for older personnel to be retired to make way for younger men who had distinguished themselves in the war. Those officers who were most likely to gain advancement were those who had gained experience in managing operations that used the combined resources of the three Services.²⁰

In his autobiography, Jones tends to gloss over this issue, noting at the end of the war, the Service had one Air Marshal and 12 Air Vice-Marshals, the majority of who had served in the Great War and were within a few years of their retiring age. The Government, according to Jones, had no alternative to placing the majority of them on the retired list.²¹ In reality the task Jones and Hewitt faced was a lot more difficult and drawn out than Jones alludes to and it was not a spur of the moment decision.²² Nor was it Jones' or the Air Board's initiative, as the Government started, at least a year before the war ended, to plan for the three Service's downsizing.

In late August 1944 Drakeford wrote to Jones questioning the suitability and qualifications of the officers holding the RAAF's higher command and administrative appointments. Jones was directed to report on the disposition of officers who did not measure up to requirements and to suggest changes that should be made. To ensure there was not a void in the upper echelons of the Service, Jones was to ascertain that when recommending changes, officers were available within the RAAF who could fill the top positions with greater efficiency and who fully merited advancement.²³

Jones compiled a list of officers considered to be unsuitable, which looked like a senior RAAF "Who's Who". At the top were the first two CAS—Williams and Goble—followed by

¹⁹ C.D. Coulthard-Clark. *Edge of Centre*. p. 73. G. Jones autobiography. p. 118.

²⁰ NAA M2740/1/69(1). *Composition of Postwar R.A.A.F.* Paper titled "Post-War Defence Policy." For Press.

²¹ G. Jones autobiography. pp. 120 – 121.

²² J.E. Hewitt. *Adversity in Success*. p. 291.

Anderson, McNamara VC, Wrigley, de la Rue, Summers, Murphy, Christie, Marsden and Murray.²⁴ Surprisingly the name W.D. Bostock did not appear on Jones' original list. The reason was that he was to be retained in the Service, temporarily at least, because of "his undoubted ability" and the position he held at the time.²⁵ We may suspect Jones and Drakeford had learned from previous dealings with Kenney and MacArthur that it was not worth while making yet another attempt to remove Bostock from his position as AOC RAAF Command while that organisation was part of the AAF. Instead they would wait until after the war's end. In the meantime, Jones put together a case to get rid of some of his other fellow officers. In looking at this initiative and determining whether Jones' actions were in the best interests of the RAAF, we should consider a few points. At the time Jones was undertaking this work, there was a perception that after the war was over Australia would have no visible threat to national security and this meant smaller Defence Services. If, at the end of the war the RAAF had a large number of very senior officers, we can ask the question: in a greatly reduced Service (in terms of personnel and aircraft) what would have been the role for many of these officers? While the methods Jones employed and the comments he made may be open to criticism, we can also ask what alternatives the Government had, other than to retire these officers? To retain them until their retirement age would have resulted in a very top-heavy personnel structure for the RAAF with the possibility of a number of senior officers having little work to do in the post war Service. Their retention would also have blocked the promotion of junior officers and it may have meant that the animosities that existed pre war and during the war may have continued. An alternative might have been to offer the retirees senior positions within the Commonwealth

²³ RHS 31/8/44. *Proposal to Retire Certain Senior Officers of RAAF*. Minute from Drakeford to Jones. 31 Aug 1944

²⁴ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 Sep 1944.

²⁵ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 17 Jan 1945.

Public Service, but this would have upset the non-productive practice of advancement through seniority, which hindered modernisation of the Federal Public Service up until the 1980s.²⁶

Jones was quite forthright in his reasons for recommending the retirements. His top-secret minute to Drakeford and associated documents are worth noting because they show how Jones viewed some of his fellow officers. In the case of Richard Williams, Jones wrote that this officer was not considered for the position of CAS at the time Burnett left and “in view of this it is unlikely that the Government would wish to give him another appointment commensurate with his rank.” Jones, if he was aware of the circumstances surrounding his own appointment, chose to ignore them, because we now know his claim to be incorrect as Williams was Drakeford’s first choice for the CAS position in 1942. Jones provided the Minister with his views of Williams’ management of the RAAF:

In my opinion, this officer, although competent in details of service administration, is lacking in the breadth of view necessary in an officer of his rank, and he has been conspicuously lacking in judgement in the selection of officers for promotion. He must accept a considerable measure of responsibility for the lack of fighting strength of the R.A.A.F. at the outbreak of war. This applies particularly to the absence of reserves and a secure source of supply of up-to-date aircraft.²⁷

Jones, quite unfairly, was prepared to blame Williams for nearly every problem that beset the RAAF in the SWPA. Such an attitude does not reflect well on Jones, and some of his comments are so petty as to be almost irrelevant. We should note the introductory phrase, “In my opinion” and question how Jones formed this judgement. We can only suspect that it was based on Jones’ long held view that Williams was an Army officer who lacked a technical knowledge of aircraft. Jones blamed his former Chief for the lack of combat aircraft in the RAAF at the outbreak of the

²⁶ The opportunities for public service appointments for retired officers would have been slim; when we consider that it was not only the RAAF that was down sizing but the RAN, Army and the Service Departments as well. In effect there would have been more people than positions available.

²⁷ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944.

Pacific War (ie “the lack of fighting strength”) and claimed Williams was totally unaware of aircraft acquisition processes, that he, “thought you could conjure them (aircraft) up out of space when the trouble started.” Williams’ perceived problems with aviation were due to his Great War service. He had been in Palestine and, according to Jones, had no idea of, “the aircraft situation as others had seen it on the Western Front. Those of us who knew what was happening with the aircraft situation in Europe could see we were falling further behind.”²⁸ Nowhere among the papers on the official RAAF file dealing with the retirement issue was there any documented evidence that Williams lacked the “breadth of view necessary in an officer”; nowhere was there any reference to the officers who were promoted through Williams’ lack of judgement. On this latter point one could suspect Jones was still carrying a grudge over Williams’ initial appointment of officers at the time the RAAF was formed more than 25 years earlier.²⁹ Jones claimed Williams, “had his favourites, members of his own squadron in the [Great] war; he got them all into senior RAAF positions after the war.”³⁰

Such comments also hint at the jealousy, of which Jones was so critical, that was so prevalent within the Service in its early days.³¹ Perhaps at this point the jealousy had finally surfaced in Jones himself and he was in a position to do something about it. Over the years Jones must have forgotten his adverse comments about Williams, because in his autobiography he wrote a contradiction when discussing Bostock, to the effect that the latter “had little respect for

²⁸ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*. This is a poor argument on Jones’ part, as Williams acknowledges that he was tasked with acquiring aircraft for the RAAF during his time in the United States during the Second World War. R. Williams These are Facts. p. 297.

²⁹ It will be remembered that Bostock, at the time initial ranks were allocated in the RAAF, was appointed to a rank higher than Jones.

³⁰ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic – 21 Jan 88*. Despite Jones’ perceptions about favouritism, it would appear that the RAAF’s senior officers service during the Great War was wide spread through the AFC and RFC/RAF. Williams, Anderson, McNamara VC, Murphy and Lukis served with 1 Squadron AFC. Cole served with 1 and 2 Squadrons. Cobby and Jones served with 4 Squadron. Bostock, Brownell, de la Rue and Summers served with the RFC/RAF and Goble served with the RNAS.

³¹ C.D. Coulthard-Clark. The Third Brother. p. 36.

Williams's considerable ability."³² Or perhaps it was that by the time he wrote his autobiography, Jones had become aware that Williams was held in high regard by many people, as the "Father of the RAAF" and it would discredit Bostock if he were known to be critical of the distinguished Air Marshal.

In his comments to the Government, Jones did not consider the fact that Williams had spent most of the Second World War outside Australia, where he was away from the day-to-day management of the RAAF.³³ However, one expects Williams on his overseas postings would have been dealing with senior RAF and USAAF officers on a regular basis and no doubt would have acquired a reasonably good overview of the entire conflict. One can thus assume Williams' knowledge and experience, gained from working in the UK and US, would have been quite valuable to the post war RAAF. Nevertheless, at that time, William's career was dependent on Jones' opinion and that opinion is what influenced Drakeford. It is also reasonable to suspect Jones realised that when Williams returned to RAAF HQ he again would be the Service's most senior officer in Australia and the Government would have to decide whether to appoint the Air Marshal as CAS or to find him other employment. By recommending Williams' retirement, with the accompanying criticism, Jones was clearing a path for his retention as CAS in the post war RAAF. This supposition could also be applied to the other officers who were senior to Jones. The Service's other former Australian CAS was next on Jones' list.

Air Vice-Marshal Goble did not fare much better under Jones' critical pen:

In my opinion this officer has a sound Service knowledge and an alert mind, but suffers from certain nervous characteristics which make continuous application to a task impossible. This has severely handicapped him in his Service work.³⁴

³² G. Jones autobiography. p. 81. Or perhaps it was that Jones disliked both officers, but of the two, Williams was the more preferable, and he used the comment as another opportunity to criticise Bostock.

³³ R. Williams These are Facts. p 245 and 297. Williams served as AOC of Administration for the RAF Coastal Command until 1940. He was appointed the RAAF representative to the Combined Chiefs of Staff organisation, in Washington, in 1942.

³⁴ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944.

Jones would have been aware of the facts surrounding Goble's resignation and while he was Assistant Chief of the Air Staff he had the opportunity to observe Goble's command and management abilities and could well have based his judgement on what he saw. It should be remembered that Goble was in Canada at the time and this was to be to his disadvantage because Jones' advice to Drakeford was Goble (then 53 years of age) had no position to return to upon the completion of his overseas posting.³⁵ This could well have been the case when Goble returned to Australia and to a much smaller RAAF. One could be forgiven in thinking, when reading the reports on the officers, that no one in the RAAF was any good, except Jones! It could also be considered to be quite unprofessional for him to level criticism of this nature, without specific examples to reinforce them, against his fellow officers.

Air Commodore (acting Air Vice-Marshal) W.H. Anderson, Jones considered, was a hard working, conscientious and loyal officer but he lacked constructive capacity and organising ability and he had on occasions shown regrettable weaknesses. This was an interesting comment on an officer who the Federal Government had considered suitable to act as CAS four years earlier. Anderson had held the position of Air Member for Personnel between 30 November 1943 and 10 October 1944.³⁶ In this role Jones would have had the opportunity to observe Anderson's skills and abilities in a senior management position. Therefore, it may be argued that Jones was in a position to form the opinion the officer was unsuitable for further appointments to high administrative positions.³⁷ CAS was more critical of Air Vice-Marshal F.H. McNamara VC:

³⁵ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944.

³⁶ RHS *The Air Board*.

³⁷ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944.

Although he possesses considerable theoretical Service knowledge, he has shown himself to be incapable of co-ordinated thinking required of an officer in a senior appointment.³⁸

Jones added that while McNamara was Air Liaison Officer in London the administrative affairs of UK based RAAF personnel fell into a chaotic condition. Jones disregarded the satisfactory reports McNamara had received from the RAF and considered that he would be quite unsuitable for further senior appointment within the RAAF.³⁹

Jones was of the view that acting Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole lacked “certain of those qualities expected to be possessed by senior officers of such rank.”⁴⁰ No doubt Jones was referring to Cole’s performance at Ormond Hall. Air Vice-Marshal Henry Wrigley was reported to have moderately good Service knowledge and was a pains-taking administrator who, unfortunately had no great depth of view and was occasionally very undiplomatic—he made considerable errors in the manner in which he handled subordinates. The reason justifying H.F. de la Rue’s retirement was his poor health, otherwise Jones considered that he had a “fairly good Service knowledge” and considerable strength of character “although sometimes his efforts are ill-directed.”⁴¹

Air Commodore J.H. Summers was also the subject of criticism. He was said to have limited Service knowledge and his decisions were erratic. He was a good disciplinarian but had to be censured for failing to carry out orders from RAAF HQ and for adopting an insubordinate

³⁸ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944.

³⁹ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944. In a top secret minute titled “Retirement of Certain R.A.A.F. Officers” were harsh comments to the effect that McNamara VC, Anderson, Lukis, Brownell and Summers did not take a lead in the RAAF during the War commensurate with their seniority in the Permanent Air Force. While they may have carried out the duties assigned to them in wartime posts with reasonable efficiency, their future employment would have prejudiced the promotion of younger and at least equally efficient, officers and the development of the RAAF.

⁴⁰ RHS 31/8/44. Top secret minute “Retirement of Certain R.A.A.F. Officers.”

⁴¹ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944.

attitude. Summers was AOC North Eastern Area, but Jones considered him to be unsuited to further employment in senior RAAF positions.⁴²

Now for the remaining officers. Wing Commander (temporary Air Commodore) Arthur Murphy had passed the retiring age for his rank and it was thought he should make way for younger officers to advance.⁴³ Other officers who had also reached or passed their retirement age were Wing Commander (acting Air Commodore) R. Christie, Wing Commander T.R. Marsden and Squadron Leader (temporary Group Captain) J.F. Murray.

Based on Jones' opinions, Drakeford advised Curtin that retirement of the nominated officers was desirable in the interests of the RAAF.⁴⁴ Despite the Government's desire to down size the Services, the retirement process proceeded slowly, as F.M. Forde, (the acting Minister for Defence), then asked for further information about the retirement selection process.⁴⁵ Jones replied that he had considered all officers from the rank of Group Captain upwards before he made his recommendations. Bostock was missing from the list of officers presented to the Minister for Defence but his case, Jones claimed, was fully considered.⁴⁶

It was at this point that the Prime Minister added a new dimension to the retirement situation. He requested Drakeford to supply him with details of all officers at the rank of Air Commodore

⁴² RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 September 1944. On reading these comments, one might suspect that Summers may have taken the 'wrong' side in the Jones-Bostock feud.

⁴³ Arthur William Murphy deserves a special mention as he had the distinction of being RAAF airman number 1. He had served as a gunner and later as a pilot with 1 Squadron AFC in the Middle East, was Mentioned in Dispatches and commissioned. After the war he served with the Central Flying School as a Sergeant Mechanic (his commission was terminated at the end of the Great War). He gained further fame by accompanying Captain Henry Wrigley on the first trans-Australian flight—they flew a BE-2 from Point Cook to Darwin in November and December 1919. Murphy was again commissioned and spent the remainder of his time in the RAAF working in aircraft maintenance areas. N.C. Smith One Thousand Airmen: An Examination of the First 1000 Enlistments in the Royal Australian Air Force. Mostly Unsung Military History Research, Gardenvale, Vic. pp. 36-37.

⁴⁴ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Drakeford to Curtin. 7 October 1944. Interestingly Williams' name was omitted from this first list Drakeford sent to Curtin. Perhaps the Minister still had other plans for Williams.

⁴⁵ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Forde to Drakeford. 30 December 1944.

⁴⁶ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 17 January 1945. On some occasions Jones must have wondered about his political masters. Forde asked that he be supplied with details of retirement ages and plans

and above. It would appear from the second paragraph of Curtin's request—"Statements relating to the Navy and Army have been received from the other Service Ministers,"⁴⁷—the initiative to retire the RAAF officers did not begin with Drakeford but at a higher level. If we go back a few months to October 1944 we find that the Army had expanded its senior officer retirement plans. F.M. Forde, in his capacity of Minister for the Army, had written to the Treasurer, stating in his opening paragraph:

On 27th September, the Commander-in-Chief forwarded a recommendation to me to provide for reduced retiring ages and adequate retirement benefits for Staff Corps Officers.⁴⁸

Forde also noted that Blamey asked for a complete retirement plan to be in operation some time before the cessation of hostilities, so that its details would be known to officers planning advancement in the AIF and also to officers who would have to be retired at that time.⁴⁹ The Army's experience in officer retirement differed to that managed by the RAAF in that it started earlier and made better provision for the retirees. The Army started to downsize its personnel numbers in 1943 and many officers were retired before the end of the war. In some cases the retirements were well managed, in other cases they were poorly managed. Some officers were content to leave the Army, while others were disappointed because they considered they had something to contribute to the Service.⁵⁰

So it would appear Drakeford, Jones and the Air Board were not acting alone in retiring senior officers – although it seems that the Army's plans were much more visible to all officers concerned and the Army hierarchy had made better superannuation provision for the officers

for financial benefits for the retirees. In the final paragraph of this minute Jones pointed out to Drakeford that he had already given this information in his original minute in September 1944.

⁴⁷ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Curtin to Drakeford. 20 March 1945.

⁴⁸ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Forde to Chifley. 14 October 1944.

⁴⁹ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Forde to Chifley. 14 October 1944.

⁵⁰ Discussions with Mr Roger Lee, Australian Army History Office. 6 August 2003.

concerned.⁵¹ While Curtin received a list of all senior RAAF officers in April 1945, it would be several more months before action started.

Finally, in October 1945 the Air Board decided who should be retired. The long list started with Williams, Goble, Anderson, Cole and McNamara and this time Bostock was included. The official statement to support Bostock's retirement read as follows:

This officer, has during the war period held appointments as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff and subsequently as Air Officer Commanding R.A.A.F. Command. He has displayed inability to work in harmony with certain other high ranking R.A.A.F. officers, while his attitude towards the Air Board in certain matters (his use of the title Air Officer Commanding in Chief, R.A.A.F. Command being a case in point) has indicated a lack of appreciation of his responsibility, as well as of co-operation, which considerations render his continued employment undesirable in responsible posts commensurate with his rank and seniority. These difficulties are already known to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence.⁵²

Jones made a comment, late in his life, which clearly indicates he did not regret retiring his rival—"immediately the war ended, we had to get rid of about twelve senior officers and Bostock was one to go I can assure you. The Labor Government had no time for him."⁵³

In his minute to the Air Board, Hewitt explained that Wrigley, de la Rue, Murphy, Eaton, McIntyre, Swift and Murray had passed the statutory fixed age for retirement. The posts occupied by Williams, Anderson, Cole and McNamara had, or would, become obsolete.

One other issue Hewitt considered was the availability of suitable officers to continue the efficient management of the RAAF. This was determined by calculating the maximum number of officers expected to be required for the post War RAAF and the suitable officers who would

⁵¹ R. Williams. *These are Facts*. p. 329.

⁵² NAA A5954/69/1510/1 *Higher Direction of RAAF—Retirement of Senior Officers of Permanent Air Force*. Minute from Drakeford to Forde. 12 Jan 1946. "Proposal to Retire Certain Senior Officers of the Permanent Air Force", Attachment B. It is interesting to note that Attachment A to the same minute gave a brief explanation for the retirement of each officer. Most explanations were summarised into a paragraph, except Bostock who was given one and a half pages!

⁵³ C.D. Coulthard-Clark. *Interview with AM Sir George Jones of Beaumaris, Vic 21 Jan 88*.

remain in employment. It was determined that senior appointments would not exceed 13 (Air Board appointments and Commands). Hewitt made the logical observation to the Air Board to reinforce his nominations to the senior appointments “It would appear to follow that, if the officers now holding the other 7 Commands are capable of efficiently administering those Commands in wartime, they must be equally capable of administering comparable peace time appointments”. Hewitt nominated eight officers (Charlesworth, McCauley, Ewart, Scherger, Knox-Knight, Wilson, Lachal and Walters) as being suitable for senior appointments within the post War Service. In addition a further 26 officers—mostly at Group Captain level—were nominated for “more junior appointments.” This list included Hancock, Hely, Garing and Murdoch.⁵⁴

Hewitt and Winneke drafted letters to each officer nominated for retirement. The letters, which included details of the amounts of money to be paid as retirement benefits, were taken to Drakeford who asked that they be dispatched at an opportune time during the Parliamentary session, as he expected to be faced with questions and possibly complaints in the newspapers. Hewitt advised Drakeford not to answer any question because the wording of each letter was courteous and considerate and the compensation offered was fair. Before the letters were dispatched Drakeford asked for Jones’ opinion. Jones paused as he walked towards the Minister's desk, raised his right arm, clenched his fist and exclaimed “Let us grasp the nettle.”⁵⁵

The letters were similar in content, advising the recipient that the Government had considered the retirement of certain Permanent Air Force (PAF) officers and that the post-war Service would be required to function on a considerably reduced basis. Therefore, unless older officers retired

⁵⁴ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Hewitt to Secretary Air Board. Oct 1945. Of those nominated, Scherger, McCauley, Hancock and Murdoch all reached the position of CAS.

⁵⁵ J.E. Hewitt. Adversity in Success. pp. 292 – 293.

there would have been limited advancement opportunities for younger officers. The letter continued with:

Under these circumstances, it has been decided, after due consideration, to effect your retirement, and the normal administrative action necessary to place you on the Retired List will be initiated in the near future.

In communicating this advice to you, the Government desires me to convey expression of its great appreciation of the long and valuable service you have rendered to the Royal Australian Air Force and to express its good wishes to you for the future. Please also accept my personal thanks for your assistance during the time I have been Minister.⁵⁶

The remainder of the one and three quarter page letter dealt with redundancy payments, which were also a matter of contention for those who were being retired. Jones expressed little sympathy towards the retirees, stating only that the way was now clear for suitable careers for officers who had entered the Service before the Second World War and who had served with distinction during that war—officers such as Hewitt, Bladin, Charlesworth, McCauley and Scherger were all in this category.⁵⁷

The press was very quick to question the retirements. The Argus reported that no official reason had been given for Bostock's retirement and Australia lost, for its immediate post-war defence planning "the ability and knowledge of the airman who directly controlled the whole of Australia's wartime operational air forces."⁵⁸ In the editorial of Monday 25 February 1946, The Herald asked why some of the most senior and distinguished RAAF officers were cast abruptly into retirement without a public expression of gratitude from the Government. The editorial also asked why Bostock was removed on the grounds that there was no longer a place for him within the Service. The column's writer reminded the readers there were jealous rivalries present

⁵⁶ RHS 31/8/44. Letter from Drakeford to Bostock. 21 Feb 1946. Similar letters were sent to other officers.

⁵⁷ AWM MSS 0738 *Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir G. Jones, KBE, DFC*.

⁵⁸ *Compulsorily retired from RAAF. Air Vice-Marshal Bostock* in The Argus. 23 Feb 1946.

within the Service during the war and commented that it would have been a deplorable situation if Bostock's retirement was a result of the feuds that arose from the divided command.⁵⁹

One question that comes to mind is why Drakeford allowed Williams to be retired? Prior to Jones' appointment as CAS, Drakeford had nominated Williams for that position. As we know this had been vetoed by Curtin. Drakeford now had a new Prime Minister to deal with and one wonders why he did not put the same case he presented in 1942 for Williams, to Chifley. Williams was Drakeford's first choice for appointment as CAS in May 1942—four years later he was first on the retirement list. Drakeford, however, found another way to look after Williams.

Williams had received a hint that he was to be retired, while he was in the US. Early in January 1946, Drakeford telephoned him and asked whether the Air Marshal would accept appointment to the position of Director-General of Civil Aviation but it was not until he returned to Australia that he learned officially of the retirement plans.⁶⁰ He was unimpressed because, like all military officers, he expected he would be employed until he reached his retirement age. It was, he wrote, with justifiable bitterness "the meanest piece of Service administration in my experience."⁶¹ Williams accepted the Civil Aviation appointment.

Bostock too was unhappy with his forced retirement and wrote a letter of protest to Drakeford. In addition he submitted a redress of grievance to the Air Board. The redress was supported by a personal letter from MacArthur, who described Bostock as "one of the world's most successful airmen."⁶² As one might expect, regardless of MacArthur's letter, the redress was unsuccessful.

⁵⁹ *Politics in the RAAF* in The Herald. 25 Feb 1946.

⁶⁰ R. Williams. These are Facts. p. 326. Civil aviation was, at that time, the responsibility of the Minister for Air.

⁶¹ R. Williams. These are Facts. p. 327 – 329.

⁶² Alan Stephens *Demobilisation and the Interim Air Force*. p. 16.

Another senior officer who went into retirement at this time was Jones' old friend, Air Commodore A.H. Cobby. It had been decided that the services of Cobby, together with Group Captains Simms and Gibson (who had been on Morotai at the time of the 'mutiny') would be terminated as a result of the findings of the Barry Commission and subsequent Air Board action. Simms and Gibson would be given the opportunity to resign their commissions and, if they did so, their discharge papers would record "at their own request."⁶³ The Air Board looked after Cobby a bit better than some of his contemporaries and Langslow arranged employment for Cobby in the Department of Civil Aviation after the latter ceased duty with the RAAF on 19 August 1946.⁶⁴

The September 1942 edition of the Air Force List showed George Jones as the fourth highest ranking officer, preceded by Williams, Goble and Bostock. In the June 1947 edition of the List Jones was the RAAF's most senior officer.⁶⁵ He was, by that time, the only air force chief from the Second World War who had retained his position in peacetime. Jones and Air Commodore Mackinolty were the only remaining RAAF officers who had seen service in the two world wars.⁶⁶

The removal of the senior officers may have solved the RAAF's leadership problems and allowed for the advancement of talented officers, but the Interim Air Force (as the RAAF was known in the immediate post war years) was not a happy organisation, as Sir Keith Park found when he visited Australia in June 1946. During his time in the country he had discussions, with political and Service leaders, on plans for the RAAF's future. Post war planning was making its mark on the Service, as Park found discipline and morale to be poor and while there were many

⁶³ RHS 31/8/44 Minute from Langslow to Drakeford. 7 Feb 1946. Regardless of the opportunity, Gibson chose not to retire and remained in the Service until the 1960s. Discussions with Air Vice-Marshal Dave Rogers (Retd). 28 September 2003.

⁶⁴ RHS 31/8/44. Minute from Langslow to Hewitt. 14 Aug 1946.

good junior officers, there was a lack of confidence towards the future of the RAAF. There was also little of the camaraderie Park had experienced in the RAF and RNZAF. To make matters worse for personnel morale, Park found the newspapers were very unfriendly to the Services and showed no interest in comments he made while in the country, on the roles of both air power and Australia in the Second World War.⁶⁷ Jones met with Park as part of the discussions on Service planning but tended to distance himself from the distinguished New Zealander outside work engagements and it was Kingsland (still a serving officer at that time) who, on at least one occasion, invited Park to the officer's mess for a drink. Jones did not drink alcohol regularly, nor in great quantity, nor did he frequently mix socially with his colleagues (he was not a regular patron of the mess) but on this occasion he showed the New Zealander a great discourtesy. As CAS he should have shown Park every accommodation, befitting a man of his stature. It is possible, however, that Jones suspected the Australian Government still maintained its plans to replace him with Park, and without MacArthur to disrupt things, these plans could have gone ahead. Whatever his reason, Jones was unhappy and stayed away from Park.⁶⁸

Jones' fears were not realised and not only was he retained as CAS but he was made a temporary Air Marshal on 1 January 1947. He was promoted to that rank on 1 July the following year (a promotion that the Government could have made in 1942). It is interesting to consider that when the RAAF was at its largest in terms of personnel, units and assets it was headed by an Air Vice-Marshal. Two years after the end of the war, when the RAAF was a fraction of its wartime size, the Government finally saw fit to promote Jones. Jones continued to manage the

⁶⁵ RAAF Publication No 598. *Royal Australian Air Force List*. June 1947.

⁶⁶ AWM MSS 0738 *Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir G. Jones, KBE, DFC*.

⁶⁷ V. Orange *Sir Keith Park*. pp 239 – 240. I found no record of discussion that may have taken place between Park and Jones. One assumes that if future planning for the RAAF was discussed, Jones took little heed of the organisation of the RAF, as his own plans for the RAAF retained the pre-War area commands, rather than adopting the RAF system of functional commands.

⁶⁸ Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland.

much-reduced RAAF in the same manner as he had done during the war, and as part of his work, he continued to visit RAAF bases both in Australia and overseas, although not with the same frequency. Jones enjoyed flying and took the opportunity to pilot Service aircraft during his visits to the bases. He managed to fly each new aircraft as it entered RAAF service, including the de Havilland Vampire—the RAAF’s first jet aircraft. A contemporary newspaper account reported Jones’ conversion to jet aircraft was conducted in an extremely short period of time. He was shown over the Vampire at Williamtown, climbed into the cockpit and took off “what is more, he flew it in bifocals!”⁶⁹ Despite his enjoyment of flying, as CAS he did not have the opportunity to exercise his ability as a pilot frequently enough and thus became out of touch with flying and had lost some of his skills. Fortunately his forays into the air were free of major accidents.⁷⁰

In spite of his position as a Service chief, to the public Jones was still seen as a quiet and unassuming man. In a 1951 newspaper interview he explained his decision making technique, which was borrowed from Lord Tedder “Faced with a problem, you obtain from experts a statement of their varied opinions. You make an appreciation of all views and reach a conclusion. Then you follow it colourlessly.”⁷¹

Newspaper Comments

Following his retirement from the RAAF, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock took up work as a newspaper journalist. As a civilian he now had the opportunity to tell his side of the RAAF’s high command debacle. Starting on 22 June 1946, as “The Herald’s Specialist Aviation Correspondent,” he wrote a series of four articles, which were published in The Herald. In the first article he called for a Royal Commission or some other competent investigation into what

⁶⁹ *A man called Jones* in The Herald. 30 June 1951.

⁷⁰ Alan Stephens & J. Isaacs High Flyers. p. 96.

he referred to as “the unsound foundations upon which our Air Force rests.” He raised eight points he considered the Federal Government should answer before it decided upon the structure of the post war RAAF.⁷² The newspaper articles are important because they present views of one side of the command struggle, written soon after the war ended. Interested observers would have to wait for over forty years to read Jones’ view of the unhappy episode and even then, those observers would be disappointed with Jones’ lack of detail.⁷³

Bostock was motivated by the desire to tell the story of RAAF Command because, as he claimed quite incorrectly “It is unlikely that it will find a place in the official history of the RAAF as prepared by the Department of Air.”⁷⁴ In making this claim he does a great disservice to the men who compiled the four volume history of the RAAF in the Second World War.

He stated that decisions regarding the future RAAF should be clear-cut, progressive and far sighted without, “the muddled system of control which caused inefficiency and appalling waste of effort” during the war. Bostock described the divided command as a dangerous and impractical handicap probably unprecedented in military history. He claimed that the Minister and the Air Board created problems that should never have existed. Once again he raised the issue of administration functions being retained by RAAF HQ and he was also critical of the appointment of officers to operational positions without his consent.

⁷¹ *A man called Jones* in The Herald. 30 June 1951.

⁷² W.D. Bostock *RAAF’s Unhappy Story: Govt. Indicted On Eight Points* in The Herald. 22 June 1946.

⁷³ George Jones’ autobiography From Private to Air Marshal was published in 1988. It is a disappointing book because of what it does not tell the reader. Its 155 pages are a collection of Jones’ recollections about certain events in his life. However, he still does not explain the majority of events, for example: why he took certain actions (for example, why he joined the RAAF in 1921); his relationship with politicians; why he entered politics himself (his election campaigns are totally omitted from the book as are most details of his family life). Jones had the opportunity to produce a work that could have been regarded as a key historical reference on the RAAF between 1921 and 1951. Unfortunately this was not his intention, as he wanted to write about how he saw things.

⁷⁴ W.D. Bostock *Command Muddle At Grim War Stage* in The Herald. 24 June 1946.

Bostock also leveled criticism at RAAF HQ because it failed to provide adequate aircraft maintenance facilities and because it made inflexible rulings that were sometimes dangerous and often unsuitable for combat units. In this instance he cited the withdrawal of the heavy bombers prior to the Borneo operations.⁷⁵

Bostock's initial article was a series of accusations and general criticisms and he gave few actual examples of poor administration on the part of RAAF HQ. The public had to wait until 24 June 1946 to read how he saw the RAAF's problems come into being. In Bostock's view, the problem stemmed from the interpretation of the agreement that placed the control of the RAAF under the commander of the Allied Air Forces. Bostock claimed that Drakeford knew nothing of the realities of war and his view of the role and organisation of the RAAF differed to that held by Burnett.⁷⁶ The following day Bostock wrote that he was not the only officer "who suffered headaches over the RAAF's muddled wartime organisation."⁷⁷ He claimed that General MacArthur had to protest against its inefficiency and General Kenney protested against 'Melbourne' issuing orders without his concurrence. Bostock made no mention of the Australian Government's attempts to resolve the problem and MacArthur's opposition to their efforts.

In the fourth and last article in the series *RAAF's Unhappy Story* Bostock blamed Drakeford for not supporting him when he protested against unwarranted, confusing and dangerous interference in his command from RAAF HQ. He also cited instances where there were considerable delays in providing materiel and construction work urgently needed by operational units. One important point Bostock raised in this article was that RAAF HQ seemed unable to

⁷⁵ W.D. Bostock *Command Muddle At Grim War Stage* in The Herald, 24 June 1946.

⁷⁶ W.D. Bostock *Command Muddle At Grim War Stage*. Drakeford's lack of military knowledge was also noted by Kenney who wrote that the Minister had been head of a railway union and had no aviation background, "but he was trying". Kenney added that he considered Drakeford was, "sincere and honest and would help in every way possible." One thing that Kenney liked about him was that he did not pretend to know anything about aviation or the strategy and tactics involved in the use of air power. G. Kenney General Kenney Reports, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁷ W.D. Bostock *Generals Protested About "Confused" RAAF Headquarters* in The Herald, 25 June 1946.

keep pace with the progress of the war,⁷⁸ especially in regard to the airfield construction program.⁷⁹

Bostock noted the success of the Borneo operations and stated that neither praise nor congratulations was received from Drakeford, the Air Board or CAS. He then raised an even more contentious issue—that of recognition for excellent service by RAAF Command personnel. During the existence of RAAF Command, Bostock recommended 33 honours and awards and 42 Mentions in Dispatches for members of RAAF Command headquarters. The citations covered personal courage and initiative under fire; staff work of the highest efficiency; and devotion to duty. These recommendations were largely ignored and “only three minor honours were granted and five men were mentioned in dispatches.”⁸⁰

Bostock concluded his series of articles with the comment “I feel that the majority of those who served with me in RAAF Command will feel that their unrecognised efforts will not have been in vain if Parliament insists that there shall be no room in Australia’s air force for the confusion, conflict and pettiness which hindered our effort in the Pacific war.”⁸¹

Bostock’s writings attracted attention among ex-RAAF members who wrote letters to various newspapers. One of the more prominent correspondents was retired Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Cole who added weight to Bostock’s criticisms by telling a newspaper:

From the beginning of the Second World War, I felt that the administration of the RAAF was weak. For that reason I was a lot happier to serve most of the War with the Royal Air Force.⁸²

⁷⁸ As an example he cited the construction of semi-underground operations rooms at Lowood (southern QLD) and Gawler (SA) in mid 1943. The need for such facilities had passed in 1942.

⁷⁹ W.D. Bostock *RAAF Hindered From St. Kilda Road* in The Herald. 26 June 1946.

⁸⁰ W.D. Bostock *RAAF Hindered From St. Kilda Road*. One assumes that the CB and OBE awarded to Bostock were not included as part of the three minor honours.

⁸¹ W.D. Bostock *RAAF Hindered From St. Kilda Road*.

⁸² *Bostocks revelations endorsed by RAAF officers* in The Herald. 27 June 1946.

The articles caused a deal of concern for the Government, and Drakeford made a formal reply in Parliament. In his statement the Minister hit back at both the newspaper and Bostock. He described the articles:

On entirely false premises these malicious and unjustified attacks on the Government, the Air Board, and myself have built up for ulterior purposes what, without factual reply, might have been regarded as a formidable indictment.⁸³

He added that it was regrettable that newspapers should take advantage of their privileged position in the community to “belittle the efforts and the achievements of an administration responsible for a Service acknowledged throughout the world, and particularly the English-speaking world, to have achieved a standard of performance that compares favorably with any other Air Force.”⁸⁴ Drakeford repudiated Bostock’s claims starting with the official account of the Service’s activities in the recent conflict. The official history of the RAAF in the Second World War, he stated, was not to be written by the Department of Air but by three writers contracted to the Commonwealth. As an aside, on the subject of the official histories it should not come as a surprise to learn that when George Odgers, who was tasked with writing about the RAAF in the SWPA, started his research he encountered problems with the two feuding Air Vice-Marshals. He received little assistance from Jones while Bostock refused to assist Odgers, saying the historian should approach him through CAS!⁸⁵

Drakeford continued, stating Bostock’s claim as to the basic cause of the RAAF’s difficulties was that the Minister knew nothing about the realities of war and that RAAF Command should have been given control of administration did not go unnoticed. Drakeford quoted the War Cabinet Minute and also a minute from himself to Burnett in which he wrote that CAS would

⁸³ RHS 19/1/59 *Request by Air Force Association for Royal Commission to Inquire in to Allegations by Air Vice Marshal Bostock*. Statement by Minister for Air on Press Articles by Air Marshal Bostock. 10 July 1946.

⁸⁴ RHS 19/1/59. Statement by Minister for Air on Press Articles by Air Marshal Bostock. 10 July 1946.

⁸⁵ Correspondence received from Mr George Odgers of Bondi, NSW. March 2002.

assume responsibility “for all matters such as personnel, provision and maintenance of aircraft, supply and equipment, works and buildings, and training of the R.A.A.F.”⁸⁶

In addition to Bostock’s newspaper articles, another source of criticism against RAAF HQ emerged. Towards the end of the War a polemical document, drafted by an unknown author, titled The RAAF Command Scandal was circulated among RAAF officers.⁸⁷ One wonders whether Bostock condoned the writing of this account of the RAAF command situation because he expected the official history volumes would present a one sided view of the command relationship. The document was read by junior RAAF officers, among who it produced feelings of both disgust and apprehension that the Service’s senior officers wasted so much of their time and energy fighting between themselves.⁸⁸ The information contained in the document was a greatly expanded version of Bostock’s newspaper articles. This document was never formally published but Bostock sent at least one copy to a sympathetic opposition member of Federal Parliament. Thomas White,⁸⁹ a former RAAF officer, thanked Bostock for the document and considered it to be:

a scandal that you should have been so hampered in your command; it is a great pity that personal jealousies should go so far. This week in the House I intend to try again to have a Royal Commission or other enquiry, but the odds are against it.⁹⁰

Two months earlier in Parliament, White had asked for a royal commission to verify Bostock’s revelations; to ensure an avoidance of such happenings in the future; and to inquire

⁸⁶ RHS 19/1/59. Statement by Minister for Air on Press Articles by Air Marshal Bostock. 10 July 1946.

⁸⁷ AWM 54/81/2/17. *The RAAF Command Scandal*. The author is unknown, but it is attributed to Group Captain Gordon Grant who was the SAO RAAF Command HQ and it is thought he wrote it in 1946.

⁸⁸ H. Rayner Scherger. p. 69.

⁸⁹ Thomas Walter White was the Federal member for the electorate of Balaclava (Victoria) between 1929 and 1951. Between 1946 and 1951 he held the electorate for the Liberal Party. Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia. 22nd Edition. AGPS, Canberra, 1984. p. 374.

⁹⁰ NLA MS9148. *Papers of Sir Thomas White*. Folder MS9148/8/13. Letter from White to Bostock. 16 August 1946.

into RAAF policy. When making this request, White stated, “There has been too much secrecy about the Royal Australian Air Force.”⁹¹ The perceived secrecy was to continue as White’s request for an enquiry, and the release of J.V. Barry’s report of his enquiry into the Morotai ‘mutiny’ were both rejected by the Government.

Jones himself had a few clashes with White and found the politician a difficult person to deal with, even while the latter was still in uniform. White had taken leave from Parliament and served with the RAAF in Europe during the Second World War, where he had risen to the rank of acting Group Captain. On his return to Australia he approached Jones with the proposal that officers who had been given acting ranks should be confirmed in those ranks (ie White would become a permanent Group Captain). Jones did not agree because of the numerous changes in rank during the course of the war there would have been “an absurd number of senior officers” in the Service. To overcome the situation Jones had formulated the RAAF’s policy whereby when an officer relinquished a temporary or acting higher rank, he/she reverted to his/her substantive rank.⁹² Dissatisfied because Jones would not accede to his request, White side stepped CAS and approached the Air Member for Personnel (Air Commodore Lukis) with the same proposal. White pressed his case strongly in insubordinate language, which caused Lukis to appeal to Jones for assistance and White was told that CAS’s decision was final.⁹³ This, however, was not to be Jones final encounter with White.

⁹¹ CPD Representatives. 27 June 1946. p 1962.

⁹² RAAF Museum. Air Board Order N7/46; Air Board Agendum 7157. 8 May 1946.

⁹³ AWM MSS 0738 *Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir G. Jones, KBE, DFC*.

VIII

ONE OF OUR BETTER CHIEFS OF THE AIR STAFF

George Jones remained in the position of Chief of Air Staff until January 1952. He was the person who served as CAS for the longest continuous period, almost ten years. Jones' time as post war CAS was understandably different to that during the Second World War. As the post war head of the RAAF he was notable for his achievements in re-organising and re-equipping the Service. RAAF units were deployed to conflicts in other parts of the world during the immediate post war years but Jones had little to do with the operations in which they were engaged. Once again they were part of coalition forces and operated with allied units. Jones' role was to ensure the units were equipped and adequate personnel were posted to them. Therefore the relevant parts of this chapter deal only with the role Jones played in such deployments, rather than accounts of RAAF operations.

While the RAAF ended the Second World War as possibly the world's fourth largest air force, the task that faced Jones in the immediate post war years was to construct an air force for peacetime Australia. This task was to be a major undertaking and Jones could not plan to reconstruct his Service in isolation. Instead his planning was dependent on other Government initiatives that impacted on the RAAF, the first of which was an establishment of new defence links with Britain, referred to as Co-operation in Empire Defence.¹ This initiative proposed the uniform development of air forces within the British Empire together with the establishment of air bases; an interchange of Air Force personnel and units; and the development of Australian aircraft production in co-operation with selected British manufacturers. This last initiative meant that the types of aircraft selected for production were to be

suitable not only for the defence of Australia but also for use in other parts of the Empire.²

The second influence on Jones' planning was the availability of Service personnel. The Labor Government had overseen the build up of the RAAF to its 1945 size but in the post war world political priorities changed and the Government did not need, nor could it maintain, a large air force. The personnel numbers for the Interim Air Force were set at 34,592.³ This was decreased to 29,711 in February 1945⁴ and by 1948 RAAF personnel levels would be less than half this number. As we will see, a large air force was a luxury that would not be maintained in peace time.

Reforming the Service

In the immediate post war period Jones embarked on a series of reforms for parts of the Service. The reforms, however, did not spread through every part of the RAAF. It would appear that while he followed the Government's direction for demobilising the RAAF and prepared plans for the post war Service, other things did not seem to change. We have an interesting situation in which Jones delivered reforms and restructuring that were to benefit the RAAF for many years but at the same time resisted any change to the management of his own headquarters, which remained at Victoria Barracks in Melbourne.

RAAF HQ became the central authority for major policy formulation and overall direction of the Service, overseen by the Air Board with Jones as chairman. As noted earlier, the composition (i.e. the positions and their functions) of the Air Board initially remained the same as it had been during the war and the matters that held its

¹ NAA M2740/1/69(1). *Composition of Postwar R.A.A.F.* War Cabinet Agendum No 537/1945 "Co-operation in Empire Defence." 14 December 1945.

² NAA M2740/1/69(1). "Memorandum on Co-operation in Empire Defence." Authored by F.G. Shedden. 14 December 1945.

attention still included trivial items. Thus the Service was managed by a body lacking in “new blood” and, one would assume, lacking in new ideas and initiatives. The first post war change to the Air Board came in January 1948 when the position of Business Manager was abolished. To his credit, in the few appointments he made to the Air Board, Jones ensured that those officers he selected were among the most capable in the Service, such as the November 1948 appointment of Air Vice-Marshal F.M. Bladin, an officer with a highly distinguished operational record, who was made Air Member for Personnel (AMP). In October 1949 the position of Air Member for Engineering and Maintenance (AMEM) was abolished. In its place, in recognition of the advanced developments that had occurred with aircraft and equipment during the 1940s, Jones established the position of Air Member for Technical Services, who headed the RAAF’s Technical Branch. The Technical Branch was responsible for all technical functions, including the development, design, modification and maintenance of all RAAF equipment. When establishing the position, Jones recognised there were deficiencies in the previous RAAF policies whereby General Duties Branch personnel filled technical positions, regardless of their qualifications. To overcome this, this new Branch was staffed by specialised personnel with a technical or engineering background.⁵

One area where Jones resisted any form of change was the RAAF’s area command structure. When he was appointed CAS, Jones inherited an air force that had been divided into area commands based on geographic boundaries. He maintained this system, the only change was the reduction from the six commands that had existed

³ NAA M2740/1/240 *Civil Staffing – Department of Air. Functions of the Permanent Head.* “Committee of Review – Civil Staffing of Wartime Activities. Report on the Department of Air.” 19 December 1945.

⁴ NAA M2740/1/240. Letter from Drakeford to Chifley. 18 February 1946.

during the war, to five.⁶ Some of Jones' staff officers at RAAF HQ realised there were shortcomings with the existing set up and proposed that the Service should adopt a functional command system. They persuaded Jones to call a conference of area commanders to discuss the proposal. The reaction of the area commanders was anything but enthusiastic, possibly they realised that their positions were in danger of being abolished. Consequently their participation in the meeting's discussion was limited and Jones finalised the matter by remarking "Well, when I came into this appointment, that was the organisation, a geographical one on the command side, and that's the way it's going to remain as long as I'm here."⁷ During the Second World War (and the feud with Bostock) it had been through the area command system that Jones had been able to maintain some of his control over the Service's non operational units, so one might expect that he would be reluctant to depart from a system that had served him well in the past. So the RAAF would have to wait for Jones' successor, Air Marshal Hardman, to introduce a functional command system. As we will see, some of Jones planning for the Service considered a reduction in the number of areas and after the Menzies Government came into office he prepared a plan for decentralising the Service. It would appear that this plan was opposed by Langslow (possibly because he was keen to control all financial aspects of the Service, even at the lowest level) and it was shelved until after he retired in 1951. The plan was adopted by Hardman as one of his reforms for the RAAF.⁸

Another area of deficiency was at RAAF HQ where Jones' own management style left a lot to be desired. He continued to manage his headquarters in a stultifying

⁵ NAA M2740/1/73 (11) *Higher Organisation of the R.A.A.F. – Operational & Administrative Control*. Memorandum from Langslow to Shedden "Establishment of a Technical Branch in the R.A.A.F." 18 November 1949.

⁶ Alan Stephens *Going Solo*. pp 66 – 68.

⁷ NLA TRC 121/52. *Recorded Interview with Sir Frederick Scherger*. 13 November 1973.

⁸ CPD Representatives, 14 April 1954. p. 375.

atmosphere of “we’ve always done it that way”—an atmosphere that was strongly resistant to change. The reasons for this may have been partially due to Jones’ personality, in that he had to adopt a defensive attitude because of the wartime feud. This left lasting personal characteristics and it seemed that Jones was unable to adapt to a situation in which Bostock was no longer present. Even though Bostock had been retired from the Service, Jones appeared to be a person under considerable stress.⁹ He seemed unable to relax, even in the post war HQ—free of the feud, the global conflict and with a much smaller Service to look after.

One officer who provided an insight into RAAF HQ at the time was Sir Richard Kingsland. It was while working at RAAF HQ that Kingsland had the opportunity to observe Jones’ less than dynamic management style. An example of which could be seen at the weekly meetings of senior officers. These meetings, which were convened each Monday morning, tended to be a boring waste of time for many who attended. Jones rejected any new initiatives put forward by officers with operational experience, such as Kingsland. There was no apparent malice in such rejection, just a flat refusal to change, as new ideas were not welcome. One issue that concerned the Service in the immediate post war years was the loss of talented, educated and experienced people. Kingsland raised this with Jones and suggested the Air Board should start a recruitment campaign for new blood and new brains. Jones, whose personality caused him to resist change, was absolutely horrified at the suggestion and totally opposed to such a novel idea.¹⁰ Jones’ personality was also a potential cause of problems when it came to dealing with politicians. Throughout his time as CAS it is apparent that Jones had no strategy for dealing with the Minister for Air or his staff. Even though he was

⁹ Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland. During the interview, Sir Richard told me that Jones had a habit of running his thumbnail back and forth under the table in the Air Board conference room, during Board meetings. Over the years he had worn a deep groove!

¹⁰ Interview with Sir Richard Kingsland.

CAS for nearly ten years, Jones' approach to his political masters was to act more like a senior public servant rather than as the head of a Defence Service. He provided advice and took direction without fear or favour but does not seem to have acquired the same political skills as Williams.

While the day to day management of RAAF HQ may have been dull and unimaginative, it was in the area of strategic planning that Jones was to gain his greatest post war success.

Plan D

On 22 November 1945 the Defence Joint Planning Committee (JPC) was directed to report on the size and organisation of the Services, which should be maintained in peace time, together with the costs and materiel requirements.¹¹ In its reply to Government two months later the JPC advised that the future role of the Services would be the fulfilment of Australia's obligations on the world stage. Against this scenario the ideal structure for the RAAF would be a mobile task force, including long range bombers and transports, ready to move to other parts of the world or to provide air support for the other Services; together with squadrons tasked to protect Australia against raids.¹²

Prior to the JPC undertaking its work and before the end of the war, Jones took the initiative and started to draw up proposals for the structure and composition of the post war RAAF. The first proposal—Plan A—drafted in 1945 (before the Government considered the Co-operation in Empire Defence proposal), was based on the contemporary global situation. It was an ambitious scheme for an extremely powerful air force (by post war standards), and called for 34 squadrons, equipped with

¹¹ M2740/1/294 *Post-War R.A.A.F. Nature, Organisation and Strength (Plan "D")*. On 19 November 1945 the Minister for Defence directed the Defence Committee (DC) to advise on the post war strengths and organisation of the Defence Services. The DC passed this task to the Joint Planning Committee.

134 B-24 Liberators, 250 Mosquitoes, 455 P-51 Mustangs; 105 C-47 Dakotas, 56 PBY Catalinas as well as training aircraft (this was to be an air force ten times larger than the RAAF was in 1939). Under Plan A, the RAAF was to be structured with two main components—an expeditionary force and a home defence force.¹³ In the peace time world, the Government was not prepared to accept a plan that called for an air force equipped with 1,000 front line aircraft. So Plan A was rejected, as was the subsequent proposal—Plan B.¹⁴ One could gain the impression, from Plan A, that Jones was either out of touch with the Government’s plans for a future Australia, or was unaware of the personnel situation within his own Service. Chifley’s Labor Government was directing a lot of its attention towards policies of post war reconstruction, which meant it needed a sizable labour force, and this was one reason for the instructions for the rapid demobilisation of the Services. The Government wanted people to move out of the Services and back into the labour force as quickly as possible and Service personnel wanted to return to civilian life quickly.¹⁵ It would have been unlikely that a Government, keen to have these policies put into practice would agree to a large air force, which in turn would have meant a large number of people retained in uniform. In addition, the RAAF itself was having trouble retaining personnel. At this time there were more jobs for skilled tradesmen available in Australia than there were people to fill them. Consequently, the RAAF found that it was competing for personnel alongside other employers and all three Services faced severe manpower shortages. The RAAF’s technical musterings were especially affected by the personnel shortages.¹⁶ So, even in the unlikely event that the

¹² NAA M2740/1/294. Plan “D” introduction.

¹³ NAA M2740/1/294. Plan “D” introduction.

¹⁴ Alan Stephens *RAAF Policy, Plans and Doctrine 1946 – 1971*. APSC, Canberra, 1995. p. 2.

¹⁵ C. Wilcox *Winning the Peace in Wartime*. Issue 31. August 2005. pp. 27 – 29.

¹⁶ J. McCarthy *Defence in Transition: Australian Defence and the Role of Air Power 1945 – 1954*. ADFA, Canberra, 1991. p. 8.

Government had approved Plans A or B, the RAAF would have had insufficient personnel to maintain approximately 1,000 aircraft.

Jones considered the advice given by the JPC on the future role of the RAAF and prepared a structure that would allow the RAAF to engage in overseas deployments and home defence. Plan C, submitted to the Government in September 1946, still called for a large air force, this time staffed by 19,483 personnel and equipped with 880 aircraft. While the plan called for the re-organisation of the RAAF Jones retained area commands, but he had reduced their number to three—Northern Area (Queensland and the Northern Territory); Eastern Area (New South Wales); and Southern Area (Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania). Jones estimated the cost of implementing Plan C to be £104,765,000.¹⁷

After submitting Plan C to the Government, Jones visited Britain in September 1946¹⁸ and sought advice on the future composition and nature of the RAAF from the Air Council.¹⁹ Their advice was that Australia's highest priority should be to acquire a striking force of long range bombers capable of delivering an atomic bomb. The purpose of the force would be a deterrent because, the Air Council reasoned, an enemy would be unable to determine if Australia had acquired atomic weapons, even if they were aware that Australia was not producing them. The Air Council also advocated an air force for Australia comprising 22 squadrons.²⁰

Plan C was rejected and on 14 October 1947 Jones presented the far more realistic Plan D. The Government was receptive to this plan, which proposed a much smaller

¹⁷ NAA M2740/1/69(1). Post War R.A.A.F. – Nature, Organisation and Strength. September 1946.

¹⁸ DISPREC 660/3/31 *RAAF Personnel History*. Jones, George. Personal Record of Service – Officers.

¹⁹ NAA M2740/1/69(1). Minute from Jones to Drakeford "Paper by the Air Staff, R.A.F. on Future Requirements for Air Defence of Australia. 27 September 1946.

²⁰ NAA M2740/1/69(1). Minute from Jones to Drakeford "Paper by the Air Staff, R.A.F. on Future Requirements for Air Defence of Australia. 27 September 1946. The 22 squadrons recommended by the Air Council included four long range bomber; two ground attack, six interceptor and one night fighter.

Service, both in terms of personnel and aircraft and in spite of the Air Council's advice, did not formally provide for the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Plan D became the blue print for post war air power in Australia. Jones' introduction to the plan demonstrates that, this time, he had given some serious thought to air power theory and developments. Jones stated that, notwithstanding weapons development during the Second World War, a future conflict would be a long protracted fight, which would use all the resources of the belligerent nations. If Australia was drawn into such a conflict, Jones' view was that its armed forces would be deployed to Asia or the Middle East and this would only happen after the continent's borders were secure from invasion or raids. Jones reminded the Government of the dearth of Allied air power in the early stages of the Second World War and argued that Navy and Army commanders had been slow to appreciate the idea of control of the air as an essential condition for victory in warfare. Thus, without adequate air power, the Allied forces had suffered a succession of defeats. Jones put forward some air power concepts and explained how they might be applied in future warfare. He considered it would be essential to use air power offensively, against the types of targets vital to the enemy's infrastructure, production and morale, before land operations began. In some circumstances, air power might prove so effective it might bring about the enemy's surrender and the role of the land forces would only be an army of occupation.²¹ Scenarios such as these were likely to be reinforced with the further development of airborne weapon systems. Thus research and development, Jones stated, would

²¹ On reading this, one wonders whether Jones and his colleagues had finally discovered the writings of the Italian air power theorist Giulio Douhet, although we may question the value of Douhet after the Second World War.

become an integral part of a modern air force.²² The total cost of plan over 5 years was estimated to be £80,000,000.

The development of Plan D was a great achievement for Jones and was the product of a lot of hard work. Physically the plan was a collection of documents, charts and tables, which presented detailed information on every aspect relevant to the organisation of an air force, including strategic assessments, costs, organisational arrangements and establishments. Despite this impressive collection of comprehensive documents, the RAAF still fared poorly in the Government's post war Defence plans.

Jones' Opposition to the Naval Air Branch

During the final years of the Second World War the Australian Government sought to acquire aircraft carriers for the RAN. This initiative led to the formation of the Naval Air Branch, a section of the RAN that would become responsible for all matters relevant to Naval aviation. The Government was unsuccessful in its aims during the war but continued with the initiative after the cessation of hostilities.

Jones opposed the formation of a Naval Air Branch from the outset as it would have been a rival air force and would have been competing for the same resources of money and personnel. In the covering minute of his 1946 submission on the matter to Government, he told Drakeford of his opposition:

The question of whether carriers should be included in a post-war force has yet to be discussed by the Defence Committee, and my attitude will be that, although it may be sound to acquire one or more carriers, they would be of a lower priority than our shore-based air requirements.²³

²² NAA M2740/1/294. Plan D. Foreward by Air Marshal G. Jones, C.B., C.B.E., D.F.C. Chief of the Air Staff. 14 October 1947. Plan D was upgraded over the years due to changes in conditions and Government policy decisions.

²³ NAA M2740/1/83 *R.A.N. Air Branch – Formation of*. Minute from Jones to Drakeford. 14 March 1946.

Jones' used several arguments to support his opposition. He considered that three aircraft carriers equipped with 75 aircraft was insufficient to be an effective force by itself and it could only become effective if it was part of a larger force. He noted the problems associated with finding the specialised personnel required to fly and maintain the carrier based aircraft. Jones also warned that the development of two separate organisations (the RAAF and the Naval Air Branch) would lead to inefficiencies such as duplication and parallel training regimes. He considered that the means to overcome this (if the Government continued with the initiative) was to establish common training and maintenance infrastructures.

Once again Jones was keen to protect the integrity of his Service and his submission noted that the RAAF was Australia's primary fighting arm and nothing should be done to weaken it by establishing separate sections or dissipating its effort by duplication. Considerations of economy and efficiency, he argued, made it essential for Australia to have only one air force and it should be autonomous in all matters of higher policy, organisation, equipment, and personnel. If the Government went ahead and acquired aircraft carriers, Jones' proposal was to retain the status quo in regard to the provision of aircraft and personnel "I recommend that the existing policy by which the R.A.A.F. provides air forces for embarkation in ships of the Royal Australian Navy be continued." This would be done by identifying the RAAF squadrons that would be embarked aboard the carriers and to ensure that squadron personnel receive special training in carrier duties to ensure their ability to work with other carrier forces. When they were aboard the carriers the RAAF personnel would come under the operational control of the appropriate Naval Command.²⁴

²⁴ NAA M2740/1/83. Submission titled "Establishment of R.A.N. Air Branch." March 1946.

In his opposition to the formation of the Naval Air Branch, Jones had an ally in Langslow, who advised Drakeford that if aircraft carriers were introduced into the RAN, the provision of air personnel, aircraft and maintenance should be RAAF's responsibility because two separate air forces in Australia did not appear to be justified.²⁵

The RAN's argument to support the establishment of the Naval Air Branch centred on the proposition that if Australia was to have a modern Navy capable of defending the country and its sea communications that Navy must be built around aircraft carriers. To build this modern Navy, the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton RN, called for a minimum of two carriers and three aircraft groups.²⁶ The matter was the subject of discussion by the Defence Committee (a body that both Jones and Hamilton as its members) and Jones acknowledged that he encountered difficulties in his dealings with Hamilton over the formation of the Naval Air Branch during Committee meetings. Hamilton had his way, however, as the DC agreed the RAN should acquire carriers and the means of providing air personnel for them was to be examined and reported on jointly by the Naval and Air staffs.²⁷ The matter then went before the Committee for Defence which decided in favour of a Naval Air Branch under the control of the RAN, despite opposition from Drakeford who made the unlikely claim that the establishment of a separate Naval aviation entity failed to take into account the developments and use of air power during the Second World War.²⁸ The Government approved the establishment of the Naval Aviation Branch on 3 June 1947. Jones retained some influence over Naval aviation as his

²⁵ NAA M2740/1/69(1). Minute from Langslow to Drakeford "Strength and Organisation of Post-War Defence Forces." 12 March 1947.

²⁶ NAA M2740/1/83. Letter from Hamilton to Makin. 28 June 1946.

²⁷ NAA M2740/1/83. Letter from Chifley to Drakeford. 2 September 1946. Minute from Langslow to Jones "R.A.N. Air Branch." 19 September 1946.

recommendations for the establishment of common training regimes were accepted and as part of Plan D the RAAF was committed to train 24 RAN pilots per year at Point Cook and to provide certain workshop and overhaul facilities for the maintenance and overhaul of RAN aircraft.²⁹

On 4 June 1947 the Minister for Defence, John Dedman, announced his Government's Defence policy for the forthcoming five years. Total budget allocation for Defence over five years was to be £250,000,000 (or an annual expenditure of £50,000,000). Of the three Services, the RAN received the largest allocation—£15,000,000 annually, which totalled £75,000,000 for the five years. The Army and the RAAF each were allocated £12,500,000 annually or £62,500,000 for the five years. The remainder of the money was to be spent on research, administration and materiel.³⁰

Under this new Defence policy, the Government saw the RAAF's role as assisting Australia in meeting obligations under the United Nations charter; enabling participation in British Commonwealth defence; providing a basis for expansion in wartime; and furnishing the air component for the defence of Australia. In order to be able to undertake the new roles, the RAAF was to be restructured along the lines of a permanent air force trained in the techniques of modern air warfare and capable of rapid expansion in an emergency, with a training organisation capable of rapid expansion to meet commitments in the first phase of mobilisation. In addition there was to be a maintenance organisation, which with the support of civil resources,

²⁸ NAA M2740/1/83 Memorandum from Shedden to Secretary Dept of Navy & Secretary Dept of Air. "Status and Control of Naval Aviation Branch." 9 July 1947.

²⁹ NAA M2740/1/294. Naval Aviation – RAAF Participation.

³⁰ CPD Representatives, 4 June 1947. p 3337.

would be able to support the RAAF in peace time and would be able to be expanded to meet war time needs.³¹

The new Defence policy was based on the Government's desire for returning to a strong relationship with Britain and to turn away from the wartime alliance with the US. Dedman told the Australian Parliament that despite advances in weapon technology, the British Commonwealth remained a maritime empire, depending on sea power for its existence.³² Therefore, given this rationale, it was logical for the Government to concentrate a large part of its resources on the RAN so that Service would be in a position to participate with the Royal Navy in any future conflict involving the United Kingdom. On reading this statement today one might think it harks back to the pre Second World War days of Australia's defence policy being dependent on a strong Royal Navy and the accompanying "Singapore Strategy."

The Defence policy outlined the new structure for the RAAF, which was a reorganisation along the lines of Plan D, with its squadrons and aircraft numbers reduced dramatically from its wartime structure. The new organisation called for: a home defence element; task force elements; a training organisation; a maintenance organisation; and a headquarters unit. The bottom line was the Service would comprise 16 squadrons equipped with 144 aircraft (together with 439 reserve operational aircraft and 698 training aircraft). Personnel numbers were reduced to 12,625.³³

Despite the work that went into Plan D there was an area of deficiency on the part of Jones and the Air Board. That was a body of thought, dedicated towards how best to use the RAAF. In spite of the major reorganisation, the RAAF did not develop a unique air power doctrine. It was only in the late 1950s that the RAAF adopted the

³¹ CPD Representatives, 4 June 1947. p 3341.

³² CPD Representatives, 4 June 1947. p 3341 – 3342.

contemporary RAF air power manual as their standard text.³⁴ It could be argued, however, that if the role of the RAAF was to participate with the RAF in Empire defence there was little need to develop a unique doctrine. It might be expected that under such a regime, in a future conflict, the RAF would be the major player and RAAF units would find themselves under RAF control and their operations would be subject to RAF doctrine.

After the announcement of the Defence policy Jones was retained to head the reorganised Service, despite the advice provided by Shedden to Dedman that CAS should be replaced. Shedden held the belief that the Defence Committee now should be made up of “new, young and vigorous minds” who were capable of dealing with the vast array of problems that were part of Australia’s post war defence policy. He recommended replacement of the Navy and Army chiefs and in the case of Jones, while recognising he was still relatively young, considered he had been in the post too long and should be replaced by an officer with recent operational experience.³⁵ Perhaps Shedden, after years of dealing with CAS, held the view that Jones lacked the “vigorous mind.”

In this situation, one is inclined to agree with Shedden. The Government should have used the new Defence policy as an opportunity to appoint a new CAS. Jones need not have been retired from the Service. Rather, he could have been moved sideways into an Air board position. The first question however, that comes to mind with this proposition is, who to appoint as the replacement? The answer could well have been one of the officers whom Jones himself had stated would have a good career—McCauley, Bladin or Scherger. It is highly likely that if he was asked, Jones

³³ CPD Representatives, 4 June 1947. pp 3342 – 3343.

³⁴ Interview with Air Commodore Brendan O’Loughlin AO (rtd). 14 January 2000. Alan Stephens Power Plus Attitude. p 136.

³⁵ D. Horner Defence Supremo. p. 256.

would have nominated Scherger as his successor.³⁶ Scherger got on well with Jones and served as DCAS between 1947 – 1951. He regarded Jones as one of the RAAF's better Chiefs of the Air Staff because during his time as CAS a remarkable number of projects were initiated or finalised.³⁷

US Decoration

On 2 September 1947 the Australian embassy in Washington advised the Prime Minister that the US government wished to award Air Marshal Jones the Legion of Merit on 4 September.³⁸ The Australian ambassador noted the award was to be made on the basis of Jones' operational and tactical leadership during World War Two. The proposed decoration stirred up some discussion within the Federal bureaucracy, where it was decided to oppose the award. The argument against it went along the line that during the war Jones was CAS but, as we know, RAAF operational units were placed under MacArthur's command. It was specified that CAS was then responsible for, "all matters associated with R.A.A.F. personnel, provision and maintenance of aircraft, supply and equipment, workshop buildings, and training."³⁹

The award of US decorations to other senior Australian officers was also considered when attempting to justify the award to Jones. A year earlier, General MacArthur had proposed the award of a US decoration for General Northcott for his role as CGS and C-in-C of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces (BCOF) in Japan. The Australian Government had, by that time, decided no further

³⁶ During one of our interview sessions, Mrs Anne Jones told me Sir George Jones had a great admiration for Scherger's skills and abilities. "Scherger was the only one of them that he [Jones] wouldn't say anything bad about," she commented in February 2002.

³⁷ NLA TRC 121/52. *Recorded Interview with Sir Frederick Scherger*. 13 November 1973.

³⁸ NAA A1068/7/IC47/35/1/8 *Decorations. US awards to Australian nationals: Legion of Merit—JONES, Air Marshal*. Cablegram from Ambassador, the Australian Embassy, Washington to Prime Minister. 2 September 1947.

³⁹ NAA A816/1/66/301/517 *Proposed award of U.S. Decoration to Air Marshal G. Jones*. Minute from Secretary, Dept of Defence to S. Landau and V. Quealy. 3 September 1947. S. Landau was the Assistant Secretary, Defence Planning and V.W. Quealy was the Assistant Secretary, Joint Service Personnel, Department of Defence.

recommendation would be made for the award of British decorations to members of the Australian forces for non-operational service. Therefore the award for Northcott was not agreed to “as this would lead to embarrassment in respect of the decision relating to British awards.”⁴⁰ The precedent had been set and unfortunately, for Jones, the award was not approved. The reply to the embassy stated the award was appreciated but as the US government was aware:

The policy of the Australian Government is that only operational awards be recommended for bestowal on members of the Australian Forces. It is regretted that, as Air Marshal Jones service does not come within this category, the Government is unable to agree to the bestowal of the proposed award.

You will doubtless recall that, during the war, operational control of the Australian Forces was assigned to the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, and was not vested in the Australian Chiefs of Staff.⁴¹

So, even after the war had finished, the divided command structure still worked against Jones.

Jones Adapts to a Change of Government

In December 1949 the Australian Federal political scene changed. The Labor government of J.B. Chifley was voted out of office in the general election and replaced by a Liberal government, led by R.G. Menzies. Jones’ sometime ally, Drakeford, was no longer Minister for Air. Instead CAS would now have to deal with T.W. White. Also entering Parliament at this time, as the Liberal member for the House of Representatives seat of Indi, was Air Vice-Marshal W.D. Bostock (Retd).

⁴⁰ NAA A816/1/66/301/517. Minute from Secretary, Dept of Defence to Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. 4 September 1947. W.D. Bostock was awarded the US Medal of Freedom (with Silver Palm) in 1946 and F.M. Bladin was awarded the US Silver Star in 1943.

⁴¹ NAA A1068/7/IC47/35/1/8. Cablegram from Prime Minister to Ambassador, the Australian Embassy, Washington. 4 September 1947.

Following the change of Government in 1949, Jones again tried to expand his Service. His reasoning was that the force comprising 16 squadrons was a peacetime compromise, much smaller than he wished for. It was, however, a well trained and equipped force.⁴² Perhaps he thought that the Menzies regime, with its anti Communist rhetoric would be more receptive to larger armed forces. In 1951 Jones approached the Minister for Air with a new development plan, supported now by his claim that Plan D had not been drawn up to meet Australia's strategic needs. Rather it was a plan to maintain a Service within the confines of the previous Labor Government's annual budget allocations of £12.5 million. Jones also may have been thinking that he could take advantage of the new Government and gain the support of a Minister who was a former RAAF officer, when he proposed the Service be expanded from 16 to 25 squadrons. Jones' thinking proved to be wrong and the Government took no notice of the new plan.⁴³

Jones was, however, very successful in gaining Government support for re-equipping the RAAF. Following the end of the Second World War the RAAF's policy for strategic reserve and replacement materiel had been to use the remaining wartime accumulation. By October 1950 this accumulation was either depleted or obsolescent. Therefore procurement of a wide range of assets was necessary. Jones proposed the re-equipping of the service with 222 new aircraft together with sufficient materiel to last for six months of war, including works equipment; tractors; trucks; buses; armaments; POL; barracks and hospital equipment; and communication equipment. The total cost was estimated to be £52,000,000.⁴⁴ Jones also pressed the

⁴² G. Jones autobiography. p. 122.

⁴³ Alan Stephens *RAAF Policy, Plans and Doctrine 1946 – 1971*. p. 6.

⁴⁴ NAA M2740/10/1/220. *RAAF Preparedness for War. Requirements for Aircraft, Equipment etc, on Mobilisation*. Air Board Agendum No. 10804. R.A.A.F. Preparedness for War. Requirements of Aircraft, Equipment and Supplies. 30 October 1950. The estimate included 12 Lockheed P2V5 Neptune LRMP aircraft, 44 English Electric Canberra bombers and 24 Vampire trainers.

need for the Australian production of war materiel and his aim was to maintain industries within the country that could turn to armaments production in time of crisis. This turned out to be a very positive initiative and a very successful one on Jones' part and it gained Government support. As we will see, the RAAF benefited from a wide ranging aircraft acquisition program that started during Jones' final years as CAS.

The Berlin Airlift

The Allied powers, which defeated Germany in the Second World War, divided the country in two—West Germany, which was initially controlled by the US, Britain and France; and East Germany, which was controlled by the Soviet Union. The city of Berlin (itself divided into four sectors, each controlled by the same powers) lay within East Germany. The three western powers relied on road and rail links through East Germany to keep their forces and Berlin's civilian population supplied with food and other necessities.

After the war, relations between the Western powers and the USSR gradually deteriorated and by late 1947 the Soviet Union started to impose various impediments to the land transport routes through East Germany, which slowed trains and vehicles. Then in April 1948 the Soviet military forces turned back trains and vehicles attempting to use the roads and railway lines. Finally, on 24 June these lines of communication were closed completely, thus starting the first act of confrontation of what became known as the Cold War.⁴⁵

On the day after the blockade began, United States Air Force (USAF) aircraft started to fly supplies from West Germany into Berlin. This was the beginning of a 13 month aerial supply operation known as the Berlin Airlift, during which USAF, RAF and civilian transport aircraft flew continual supply sorties from West Germany

⁴⁵ S. Eather Odd Jobs. RAAF Museum, Pt Cook, Victoria, 1996. pp. 21 – 22.

to sustain Berlin's 2.5 million residents. Other air forces, including the RAAF, were asked to assist with the Airlift.

At first Jones planned to send 12 RAAF C-47 transports from Australia, together with their crews and as many maintenance staff as could be carried safely aboard these aircraft.⁴⁶ This plan did not eventuate as the RAF had a glut of transport aircraft but insufficient personnel to crew them. So instead of fully crewed aircraft, the Australian Government sent 41 RAAF personnel to Europe to fly RAF aircraft. After training in Britain, they joined the RAF's No 46 Group at Lubeck in northern Germany. The first RAAF sortie flown in the Airlift (albeit with an RAF C-47) was on 15 September 1948.⁴⁷

Jones visited Germany in April and May 1949 and he flew into Berlin as a passenger aboard one of the RAAF crewed C-47s. On his arrival he met with Major General F.G. Callegan, the head of the Australian Military Mission in Berlin (who he incorrectly described as the military commandant of the British sector of the city). Callegan insisted on showing Jones the city and they proceeded down Unter den Linden in the General's bullet proof Daimler sedan, with the Australian flag flying. They drove through the Brandenburg Gate and toured parts of East Berlin. Jones noted the Russians gazed at them in astonishment but did not interfere with their passage. He also commented sadly on the bomb damage to Berlin, writing that "All the principal buildings, which had been so beautiful, were completely wrecked."⁴⁸

While in Germany, Jones took the opportunity to visit Cologne, the city in which he lived when 4 Squadron was part of the Army of Occupation following the end of

⁴⁶ Jones papers *The Organisation of the Post War R.A.A.F.*

⁴⁷ Alan Stephens *Going Solo*. p. 196.

⁴⁸ Jones papers *The Organisation of the Post War R.A.A.F.*

the Great War. This city too had been devastated by the Combined Bomber Offensive and Jones was unable to find the remains of the Kaiser Wilhelm Hotel.⁴⁹

Educating the Service

One of the more important areas of post war RAAF development that Jones and his staff worked on was the education of Service personnel, which took different forms. The first was the establishment of an officer school similar to the Royal Australian Naval College at Jervis Bay or the Royal Military College at Duntroon. That is, a college to provide officer cadets with leadership skills and a university education. The Air Force counterpart was the RAAF College at Point Cook, which accepted its first students in February 1948. Jones had some doubts about divisions between Service members that might occur with setting up a college to train cadets to become Permanent Air Force officers, while officers on short service commissions would be trained elsewhere. In Jones view, such a situation would lead to two different classes or types of officers and there may be rivalry between them in the work place. Nevertheless he recognised the RAAF was a Service that depended directly on a high level of technology to undertake its functions and he reasoned that a four year university standard course, for new officers, was justified.⁵⁰

The next educational establishment was the RAAF Staff College, which was also opened at Point Cook and took its first students in June 1949. Its purpose was to provide advanced Service education to selected officers to prepare them for staff or command appointments.⁵¹ The establishment of the College was brought about by

⁴⁹ Jones papers *The Organisation of the Post war R.A.A.F.* Following the end of the Great War, 4 Squadron AFC, the unit in which Jones served was sent to Germany as part of the British Army of Occupation. The squadron was based at Bickendorf and the Kaiser Wilhelm Hotel was taken over and used for officer accommodation.

⁵⁰ G. Jones autobiography. p. 125.

⁵¹ Alan Stephens *Going Solo*. p. 142.

necessity. As we know, prior to 1939, RAAF officers had the opportunity to attend the RAF's education establishments. However, the outbreak of the Second World War ended this practice, as the RAF needed all its education resources to train its own officers and officers from the Dominion air forces were excluded from RAF courses. As a result the RAAF established its own staff school at Mount Martha, Victoria, which began its first 12 week course in September 1943. The school was a worthwhile initiative and during the war years eight courses were conducted, which demonstrated the benefits of officer training within Australia.⁵²

The establishment of RAAF Staff College was a quite significant defining moment in the establishment and development of the post war Service. Modelled off Australian and overseas military colleges, the Staff College was a tangible demonstration that RAAF officers required the same intellectual development as their Navy and Army brethren. This was an essential element in the recognition of the RAAF as an independent Service. Apart from being an officer training unit, the Staff College also represented the start of an intellectual journey into the field of warfare that would become Air Power (more recently expanded to Aerospace Power). As such, it provided an intellectual centre for the RAAF to educate its future leaders in the unique features and potential of air power.⁵³

Another form of education was that for ground based technical staff. After much debate and deliberations the RAAF established an apprenticeship scheme, which started training its first intake of students in 1948.⁵⁴

In a different direction, another of Jones' legacies to his Service, which has remained up until the present day, was the formation of the RAAF Museum at Point

⁵² *The end of an era* in *Air Force News*. Vol 42, No 9, October 2000. p. 16.

⁵³ Discussions with Wing Commander John Matthews at Russell, ACT. 5 March 2002.

⁵⁴ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *From the Ground Up*. APSC, Canberra, 1997. This book provides a very comprehensive study of the training of RAAF technical ground staff.

Cook. The Museum grew from a collection of surplus materiel (including tools and weapons) that were initially stored in a hanger at the base. Most of the materiel placed on display initially was of a technical nature—no doubt reflecting Jones’ interests. The collection moved to its first permanent site—a small room in Point Cook’s education section—and was officially opened by the OC RAAF base Point Cook, Wing Commander E.B. Courtney, in June 1949.⁵⁵ Jones had his reasons for establishing the museum. He believed the policies of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra were more directed to recounting and displaying the efforts of the RAN and Australian Army and he felt the RAAF’s memorabilia should be retained at Point Cook.⁵⁶ The Museum is another of Jones’ achievements because from this small beginning it grew to a world class collection of aircraft and aerospace power related exhibits.

Malaya

While RAAF transport crews were helping prevent starvation among the populace of Berlin, some of their colleagues became involved in a drawn out campaign on the other side of the world, in the federated states known then as Malaya. The campaign had its roots in the Second World War when the British had provided assistance to Malay-Chinese communists who were engaged in guerilla activities against the Japanese in occupied Malaya. Following the end of the war and the repatriation of the Japanese, the communists then started a campaign against the British.

⁵⁵ RHS RAAF Museum file *RAAF Museum Point Cook*. Discussions with Wing Commander John Matthews. 21 February 2002. I have visited the RAAF Museum several times since 1995 and have not seen any acknowledgment or recognition of Jones’ role in its formation. On my last visit to the Museum, in April 2002, I mentioned this lack of recognition to a few staff members. A Museum guide asked “Who’s Jones?”

⁵⁶ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 16 June 2000.

By 1948 a guerilla campaign was well underway, with the communist terrorists (CTs – also referred to as ‘Bandits’) perpetrating acts of violence against British and Malay civilians and government officials. British and Malay military forces went into action against the CTs. These forces were under strength and additional support was canvassed from Commonwealth countries, including Australia. Australia’s contribution to what became known as the ‘Malayan Emergency’ was minimal, up until the Menzies’ Government was elected in 1949. Menzies quickly proclaimed the CT’s activities to be part of the USSR and People’s Republic of China’s plan for communist world domination and announced Australia would support the British effort in Malaya.⁵⁷

Although the RAAF had been reduced greatly in size and aircraft numbers, the Government was keen to send aircraft, as well as land forces, to assist the British. Jones outlined his plans for the RAAF’s commitment to Malaya to the Defence Committee (DC) at its meeting on 27 April 1950. He advised the Service could provide a transport squadron comprising eight Douglas C-47s and 168 personnel and a flight of four Lincoln bombers with 162 personnel. Jones told the DC it was impractical to send ground staff to Malaya. Instead he recommended the Australian aircraft, as well as those of the RAF, be serviced in Australia. The DC agreed to Jones’ proposal and advised Cabinet the RAAF would meet the British Government’s requests for assistance.⁵⁸ Jones then briefed R.G. Casey, the acting Minister for Air, on his proposal. His rationale was the C-47s would be able to transport land forces and supply them from the air, thus increasing their mobility, while the Lincolns could harass the CTs and keep them on the move by bombing their jungle bases.⁵⁹ The

⁵⁷ S. Eather *Odd Jobs*. pp. 40 – 45.

⁵⁸ P. Edwards *Crises and Commitments*. Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, NSW, 1992. pp. 90 – 91.

⁵⁹ G. Jones, autobiography. pp. 138 – 139.

Government took heed and on 31 May 1950, Menzies announced an RAAF transport squadron would be deployed to Malaya.

Jones naturally was well aware that during the Second World War, RAAF personnel sent to Britain under EATS had been dispersed through the RAF. This practice had been counter productive for the RAAF because it meant Australian officers were not placed in high level positions and were denied the opportunity to gain operational command experience. He had been advised this would happen again in Malaya (ie the two RAAF units would be absorbed into the RAF). Jones was not prepared for a repeat of the situation and, without consultation with his Government, formed the units into a unique Australian command—90 (Composite) Wing, RAAF. Jones' intention was for the Wing to operate as an independent force, under the general direction of the AOC Malaya.⁶⁰

Jones then cabled the Air Ministry, giving them the audacious advice that if the RAAF units did not come under the command of an Australian officer, they would not be deployed to Malaya.⁶¹ Fortunately, and much to Jones' surprise, the Air Ministry agreed to his wishes.⁶² We might expect that had they not agreed, or taken the matter further, Jones would not have been supported by Menzies or White. Jones' decision proved to be beneficial for the RAAF because it led to the appointment of Air Vice-Marshal F.R.W. Scherger as AOC Malaya in 1952 (an appointment that placed an Australian officer as the commander of all Commonwealth air forces in Malaya) and Air Vice-Marshal V.E. Hancock was also appointed AOC Malaya in 1957. Both these officers gained experience in commanding a large multinational force and both went on to become CAS of the RAAF.⁶³ The 'Malayan Emergency'

⁶⁰ Jones papers *The Communist Insurgents in Malaya*.

⁶¹ S. Eather *Odd Jobs*. p. 48. Jones papers *The Communist Insurgents in Malaya*.

⁶² Jones papers *The Communist Insurgents in Malaya*.

⁶³ S. Eather *Odd Jobs*. p. 48.

was a long conflict for the RAAF, as it continued to deploy combat squadrons to Malaya to fight the CTs up until 1960. Jones was pleased with the RAAF's role and the outcome of the conflict:

It had not been a wasted effort. The R.A.F. crews in contact with Australians made some lasting friendships; the Malaysians who were employed on the periphery of operations came to hold the Australians in high regard, and the demonstration of practical Commonwealth solidarity in pursuing the common cause could only have done good. The remarkable achievement of pacification without antagonisation was brought about, seemingly miraculously.⁶⁴

Korea

Almost five years after the end of the Second World War, the RAAF became involved in another major conflict. In June 1950 North Korean military units attacked targets in the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Menzies was quick to denounce the attacks as another instance of communist expansionism and committed elements of the Australian Services to fight in South Korea. The PM phoned Jones at home on the afternoon of Saturday 1 July 1950 and directed him to send a squadron of fighter aircraft to support a United Nations Command formed to oppose North Korea.⁶⁵ Jones selected 77 Squadron which, at the time, was based at Iwakuni in Japan and was equipped with North American P-51 Mustang long range fighters. At the time the conflict started, the Squadron was preparing to return to Australia.⁶⁶

US Air Force (USAF) bases in South Korea were attacked by North Korean aircraft at the outset of the war and Jones' first concern was that, while the US had air superiority, there was the possibility Iwakuni might be bombed by North Korean aircraft and the RAAF's aircraft could have been destroyed before they went into action. As one may have expected in an occupied country (Japan) in which there was

⁶⁴ Jones papers *The Communist Insurgents in Malaya*. Handwritten notes attached to typed pages.

⁶⁵ Alan Stephens *The Australian Centenary History of Defence. Volume 11. The Royal Australian Air Force*. pp. 229 – 230.

no perceived threat of air attack, very little had been done at the air base in regard to anti aircraft defences.⁶⁷ Fortunately the base was not attacked and 77 Squadron flew their first operational sorties of the war on 2 July 1950.

On 3 July 1950, 77 Squadron was ordered to attack targets of opportunity between Heitaku and Suwon. Eight rocket equipped Mustangs attacked road and rail transport in that area.⁶⁸ The result was the destruction of two locomotives, one truck, two staff cars and four other vehicles, while a bridge was damaged.⁶⁹ As it turned out the 77 Squadron pilots had been provided with incorrect information and the transports they destroyed had been used by US and South Korean troops and the attacking aircraft had killed 29 soldiers.⁷⁰ This tragic incident became the cause of a disagreement between Jones and aviation historian George Odgers.

In 1952, Odgers wrote a book on the RAAF's operations in Korea. Jones commented that it was a very factual book. "A bit too factual. He included that the Australian squadron had killed 29 Americans by attacking a train." The book had been drafted during the war and Odgers asked Jones to write a forward to it. Jones refused, "I wasn't going to lend my name to the fact that we'd killed 29 Americans while the war was going on."⁷¹ Jones later admitted he made a mistake by refusing the request and his refusal led to a falling out between himself and Odgers. Regardless of Jones' refusal, the book was published, with a forward by Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson.

Initially 77 Squadron was tasked with escorting USAF aircraft and ground attack missions. The P-51, with its Merlin engine, had the well deserved reputation as being

⁶⁶ RHS Unit History Sheet. No 77 (Fighter) Squadron.

⁶⁷ Jones papers. *The Korean War*.

⁶⁸ RHS Unit History Sheet. No 77 (Fighter) Squadron.

⁶⁹ RHS Unit History Sheet. No 77 (Fighter) Squadron.

⁷⁰ D. Wilson Lion over Korea. Banner Books, Belconnen, 1994. p. 15. G. Odgers Across the Parallel. William Heinmann Ltd, Melbourne, Vic, 1952. pp. 46–50.

one of the best piston engine fighter aircraft ever built. However, November 1950 saw the appearance of the first Chinese Air Force MiG-15 swept wing, jet fighter aircraft, and the RAAF pilots found themselves well and truly outclassed in air to air combat against the jet fighters. Quite clearly the RAAF needed a suitable jet fighter to regain superiority in combat. The RAAF had the jet powered de Havilland Vampire in service in Australia but this aircraft was primitive when compared to the North American F-86 Sabre or the MiG-15. The F-86 was the RAAF's preferred choice as a suitable fighter, but at the time there were insufficient to meet the USAF's needs, so the Australian government turned to the UK for fighters to re-equip 77 Squadron.

The selection of the new fighter was a compromise. The Australian High Commissioner to Britain advised the Australian Government there were three aircraft types available—the de Havilland Venom; the Hawker P1081; and the Gloster Meteor. He recommended the Venom as first choice. When it came to availability, however, things were a lot different as de Havilland was unable to deliver Venoms until 1952 and the P1081 was still under development. The RAAF had to take the Meteor, which Jones consequently accepted as the best aircraft available for 77 Squadron. At the time of its selection the inferiority of the Meteor vis-à-vis the MiG-15 does not appear to have been realised in either Australia or the UK.⁷² In November 1950 Jones ordered 36 Meteor F Mk 8 fighters and four Meteor T Mk 7 two seat trainers, which were delivered during the first half of 1951.⁷³ The Meteor was a straight wing, Second World War vintage fighter and proved to be no match for the

⁷¹ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. Interviewed by Fred Morton, c1976.

⁷² Jones papers *The Korean War*. Jones claims the UK Air Ministry was aware the Meteor was inferior to both the F-86 and the MiG-15 and this proved to be the case when 77 Squadron started to fly them operationally in July 1951.

⁷³ R. O'Neill Australia in the Korean War 1950 – 53. Volume 1: Strategy and Diplomacy. AWM/AGPS, Canberra, 1981. pp150 – 151. D. Wilson Lion over Korea. pp. 64 – 65.

MiG-15 in combat. Despite a small number of combat victories, 77 Squadron's pilots eventually found themselves relegated to flying ground attack missions in their new "fighters."

Unlike his travel regime during the Second World War, Jones made only two trips to Korea during the course of the war. There appears to be little on record about his first trip, other than he noted that he made a flight over the front lines aboard a C-47 in the company of 77 Squadron's CO, Wing Commander Lou Spence and two journalists – John Ulm and Randolph Churchill.⁷⁴ Jones made his second trip in September 1951. On this occasion the Minister for Air, William McMahon, told Parliament Jones had been sent to Korea to investigate the Meteor's combat capabilities as there had been some criticism about the aircraft's performance vis-à-vis the MiG-15.⁷⁵ This visit was well documented as Jones prepared a report on RAAF and USAF fighter squadrons Korea and, in addition, made some comments on RAAF personnel and activities in Hong Kong and Malaya. Visits to these other two countries were included as part of the trip.⁷⁶

In relation to the fighter aircraft in Korea, Jones reported the USAF fighter groups (equipped with F-86 Sabre aircraft) were usually made up of three squadrons, each of 25 aircraft. The Sabre, he claimed, had the edge over the MiG-15 in terms of firepower and performance below 30,000 ft. He judged the RAAF's Meteors to be the equivalent of the USAF's F-84 Thunderjet "they are the second best allied fighters

⁷⁴ Jones papers *The Korean War*.

⁷⁵ CPD Representatives, 2 October 1951. pp 3342 – 3343. McMahon, quite inaccurately told the Parliament that the assertion the Meteor was inferior to the MiG-15 was entirely without foundation and in dogfights it was superior to the Soviet fighter!

⁷⁶ NAA A1196/6/37/501/576 *Report on visit to Korea & Japan by CAS (Chief of Air Staff) Sept – Oct 1951*. "Report on visit to Korea, Japan and Malaya by The Chief of the Air Staff—September to October 1951." G. Jones, Air Marshal, CAS. 3 October 1951. Much of the report (at least four pages) dealt with technical subjects such as aircraft mechanical requirements and weapons trials—such as the testing of rocket projectiles or the fitting of napalm tanks to ground attack aircraft.

in Korea. Meteor may have the edge on the F-84 because of superior fire power.”⁷⁷

The US Commanders, he wrote, still consider the Meteor to be too valuable to be used on ground attack missions. Instead they were primarily used to escort bombers or reconnaissance aircraft while the Sabres were used for offensive patrols between the bomber’s target and the Manchurian border. Under these conditions, he advised, the Meteor was most useful.

One problem noted with the Meteors was the urgent need for additional aircraft. If the type was unavailable, Jones considered another aircraft such as the Sabre, would have to be acquired quickly. More importantly he commented on the need for trained pilots

New role of Air Fighting requires specialised tactics and techniques which should be taught initially in Australia. Training should therefore be concentrated on air fighting and in addition to visits by senior officers concerned, most of the capable pilots returning within the next few months should be posted to No 78 Wing.⁷⁸

On the return trip to Australia, Jones visited RAAF personnel and units based in other parts of Asia. The first stop was Hong Kong where 11 RAAF personnel were stationed with an RAF unit. His main comments related to their accommodation and uniforms. He found that their quarters were “fair” and the standard of messing far below that provided to RAAF personnel in Australia. It is not recorded whether he put in place any initiative to remedy the poor conditions.

⁷⁷ NAA A1196/6/37/501/576. p. 1. Jones appears to be inaccurate in his statement that the Meteor was the equivalent to the F-84. In terms of aircraft performance the F-84 had a higher top speed (620 mph) than the Meteor F.8 (600 mph) and a considerably greater range (1,485 miles against the Meteor’s 600 miles). The F-84’s ceiling of 43,240 feet was slightly higher than the Meteor’s 43,000 feet. The Meteor was armed with four 20mm cannon while the Republic F-84 Thunderjet carried six .50 calibre machine guns. We may question Jones’ statement that the F-86 Sabre had the advantage over the MiG-15 in firepower. The F-86 was armed with six .50 calibre machine guns, while the MiG-15 carried one 37mm cannon and two 23mm cannon. The F-86 could carry a greater quantity of ammunition and the .50 calibre machine guns had a higher rate of fire. Whereas the MiG’s cannon shells would cause greater damage to their target. Machine gun armament for US fighters was abandoned after the Korean War and later versions of the F-86 (and the F-84) were cannon armed. The majority of US fighter aircraft designed and constructed after the Sabre were armed with cannon and/or air to air missiles.

⁷⁸ NAA A1196/6/37/501/576. p. 2.

The next stop was Malaya where he visited 1 Squadron, a Lincoln bomber unit whose aircraft were used on operations against “bandits.” Jones found the aircraft serviceability and squadron personnel morale were both excellent. A transport unit, 38 Squadron, was also in Malaya and Jones noted that while morale was high, “by the nature of their duties they have not the cohesiveness of No 1 Squadron.” One interesting recommendation he made concerned the command of 90 Wing, which had initially been led by a Squadron Leader. This CO position had been upgraded to that of a Wing Commander when it was found that a Squadron Leader could not accomplish much when working within the hierarchical system of the RAF. He recommended the CO’s position be upgraded further to a Group Captain and added, “A great deal of importance is attached to rank in the R.A.F. and generally in Malaya.”⁷⁹

Jones’ views of Air Combat over Korea

After the cessation of fighting in Korea in 1953, Jones, by this time in retirement from the RAAF, put together some thoughts on the use of air power during the conflict. His initial comments were that the limitations placed on the UN commanders affected the conduct of the war. That is, in respect to land warfare, the UN Commanders had to decide whether they would halt their advance against the North Koreans at the 38th Parallel, which would sacrifice all the advantages gained from hard fighting and having the enemy on the run; or whether to push on to the Yalu River and risk conflict with China and the Soviet Union. Jones noted General MacArthur wanted to go on to the Yalu because “He realised that to halt his forces and leave the North Koreans undefeated must, at best, lead to a military stalemate, and this was not his idea of how

⁷⁹ NAA A1196/6/37/501/576. p. 8.

a war should be fought.”⁸⁰ Jones reminded his readers the UN ground forces occupied much of North Korea but air forces were not allowed to fly north of the border, “and consequently were forced to operate at a grave disadvantage.”⁸¹ The disadvantage was:

The North Korean Air Force, equipped with highly efficient Russian fighter aircraft, were all based in Manchuria outside Korean territory. The only logical way for an Air Commander to deal with such a situation was to destroy them at their bases, and in fact destroy, by bombing, the sources from which all North Korean war equipment came, also their communications running deep into territory from which these supplies were drawn. This however, was forbidden.⁸²

Generally, it appeared the UN policy was for ground forces to occupy all of Korea and to defeat the North Korean army. The air forces were restrained from hitting the enemy “where it hurt” for fear of causing an extension of the war. Korea, Jones wrote, was a war limited in regard to the area into which attacks could be made and the types of weapons used. In his opinion the UN had to choose either to fight an unlimited war until the enemy was crushed, or to fight a war of limited objective. A clear decision on this was essential, yet it was never reached.⁸³

A limited war could not be fought successfully when the aggressor had powerful friends occupying contiguous territories into which its forces could retreat and from which they could receive support. Therefore, the UN decision to engage in the land campaign was unfortunate but perhaps unavoidable. Jones considered the USAF could have caused tremendous and sustained destruction to North Korean cities and industrial targets. By this comment he did not mean using the atomic bomb because “The supply was probably limited, and the situation in Europe had to be

⁸⁰ AWM 3DRL/3414. *Papers of Air Marshal Sir George Jones*. “The Lessons of Korea.” p. 3. These notes were published as *Lessons of the Korean Campaign* in *The Age*. 27 August 1953.

⁸¹ AWM 3DRL/3414. “The Lessons of Korea.” p. 3.

⁸² AWM 3DRL/3414. “The Lessons of Korea.” p. 4.

⁸³ AWM 3DRL/3414. “The Lessons of Korea.” p. 4.

considered.”⁸⁴ Instead he considered heavy and sustained conventional bombing, the effect of which, on the aggressor, would have been considerable and it could have continued until the North Koreans capitulated. He added:

It will be remembered that the submission of Japan was brought about very largely in this way, nearly all her large cities having been destroyed by fire bombing.⁸⁵

Jones proposed three lessons that could be learnt from the Korean conflict:

1. No matter how good the cause, or how lofty the ideals to uphold, for which the UN takes up arms, strategic considerations must first be carefully thought out. Principles may have to be placed in “cold storage” temporarily, rather than enter into an unsound struggle from which no favourable and lasting decision is likely to be obtained.
2. Western Countries with relatively limited man power can no longer afford to become involved in land campaigns in Asia, but must seek to redress their inferiority in numbers by building up strong air and naval forces.
3. First-class air weapons are now so terribly destructive that their full effectiveness is not likely to be used in other than a life-and-death struggle between the nations which produce such weapons.

Jones concluded with the comment, “A powerful strategic Air Force at the disposal of the United Nations Organisation could, however, deter aggression in all parts of the World.”⁸⁶

Re-equipping the Service

Post-war aircraft acquisition was another area where the RAAF benefited from Jones’ decisions. As we know, the RAAF finished the Second World War equipped with a huge number of aircraft—far too many for the re-organised post war Service, and so

⁸⁴ AWM 3DRL/3414. “The Lessons of Korea.” p. 4.

⁸⁵ AWM 3DRL/3414. “The Lessons of Korea.” p. 4. Jones commented in 1945, Japan still had large, well-equipped and well-trained armies, no invasion by land forces was necessary.

many were sold off to the scrap metal industry. Sufficient aircraft were retained to equip the 16 squadrons proposed in Plan D but Jones encountered another issue. The aircraft, while only constructed a few years earlier, were old in the terms of technology and design. The Service's most numerous fighter, the P-51 Mustang, was designed in the late 1930s, the RAAF's first jet fighter (the de Havilland Vampire) was designed in 1943, while the Avro Lincoln heavy bomber (introduced into the RAAF inventory in 1946) was based on the wartime Lancaster bomber. Jones was well aware, even before the Korean War, that weapons system technology (including aerospace technology) had advanced considerably quickly during the Second World War and his 16 squadrons would need to be re-equipped with the very latest combat aircraft types, meaning those powered by jet engines. In his final years as CAS, Jones was responsible for the procurement of four aircraft types that served the RAAF extremely well for the next 20 years.

The jet bomber to replace the Lincoln turned out to be a very successful acquisition for the RAAF. The prototype of the twin engine English Electric Canberra first flew on May 13, 1949. Jones and a team of technical experts visited Britain during 1949, examined the prototype, and selected the aircraft for the RAAF. While the version eventually selected for the RAAF lacked some of the advanced electronic warfare aids fitted to the Canberras operated by the RAF, it nevertheless proved to be an excellent choice and 48 were built by the Government Aircraft Factory (GAF) at Avalon, Victoria.⁸⁶ The aircraft type remained with the RAAF until June 1982 and saw operational service over Vietnam between 1967 – 1971. The selection of a jet fighter was a more complicated business.

⁸⁶ AWM 3DRL/3414. "The Lessons of Korea." p. 5.

⁸⁷ B. Weston The Australian Aviation Industry – History and Achievements Guiding Defence and Aviation Industry Policy. Aerospace Centre, Fairbairn, 2003. p. 35. Alan Stephens Going Solo. p. 363.

The RAAF's first operational jet powered fighter was the de Havilland Vampire—a straight wing, single engine aircraft. The first examples of the type were introduced into RAAF service in 1947. Despite its advanced appearance, this aircraft employed dated technology in its design and construction (for example, the fuselage was constructed from fabric covered plywood)⁸⁸ and Jones recognised a more advanced type was needed. He was in a difficult situation when it came to choosing a fighter as he had been directed by the Government to only consider British aircraft (as opposed to US produced types) because of Australia's lack of foreign exchange in the form of US dollars.

The P1081 swept wing fighter was developed by the Hawker company as a private venture to investigate flight at high Mach numbers.⁸⁹ It was still under development when it attracted the interest of the Labor Government and in 1949 Prime Minister Chifley discussed, with a representative of the Hawker company—Sir Keith Park—the possibility of building the aircraft in Australia.⁹⁰ Jones had an opportunity to look over the prototype P1081 during the trip to Britain in 1949 and concluded it needed a larger or more powerful engine to replace its Rolls Royce Tay. Regardless of Jones' opinion on the aircraft's power plant, the Australian Government decided, in February 1950, to order 72 P1081s, which were to be built in Australia and powered by the Rolls Royce Nene engine (already in production in Australia and used to power the Vampire).⁹¹ Unfortunately, the P1081 acquisition plan was fraught with problems, starting with the production arrangements for Australia. Without any prior consultation, the Australian Government told CAC's management they were to build the aircraft. There were problems in Britain as the Hawker Company's project

⁸⁸ S. Wilson *Vampire, Macchi and Iroquois in Australian Service*. Aerospace Publications Pty Ltd, Fyshwick, 1994. p. 17.

⁸⁹ A 86 *Hawker P 1081* at www.raafmuseum.com.au/research/aircraft/a2series/hawk.htm

⁹⁰ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. Interviewed by Fred Morton, c1976.

management techniques were deficient and as a result the company was not able to supply production drawings to CAC, nor were they able to conclude satisfactory licensing arrangements with the Australian Government. The aircraft itself had an unremarkable career. Only one aircraft was built and it was destroyed in a crash (in which the pilot was killed) on a test flight on 3 April 1951. Hawker then became disenchanted with the project and dedicated their design effort to developing the P1081's successor—the Hawker F3/48.⁹² The Royal Air Force was in a situation similar to the RAAF—it needed an advanced swept wing fighter, but it decided not to order the P1081. Without the RAF order, Hawker completely lost interest and cancelled further development of the aircraft,⁹³ leaving the RAAF in an awkward situation.

The solution to the RAAF's problem was found, by CAC engineer L.J. Wackett, in North America. Before the P1081 project was cancelled but after being told his company was to build the aircraft for the RAAF, Wackett traveled to the UK to examine the aircraft first hand. He observed the problems Hawker was experiencing; concluded the P1081 was unsuitable and on his own initiative decided to look at the possibilities of selecting a US designed fighter for Australian production. While in the US, he met with General George Kenney, who persuaded him to consider the North American F-86 Sabre as a the most suitable candidate for his company to build. Wackett concurred and on his return to Australia put forward the proposition to Jones that CAC build the Sabre and fit it with a Rolls Royce engine.⁹⁴

⁹¹ V. Orange Sir Keith Park. p. 255.

⁹² B. Weston The Australian Aviation Industry – History and Achievements Guiding Defence and Aviation Industry Policy. pp. 36-37. Alan Stephens Going Solo. p. 346.

⁹³ D. Wood Project Cancelled. Macdonald and Jane's, London, UK, 1975. pp. 43 – 45.

⁹⁴ B. Weston The Australian Aviation Industry – History and Achievements Guiding Defence and Aviation Industry Policy. p. 37. Alan Stephens Going Solo. p. 346.

Jones now ran into problems with the Government as the Minister for Air (T.W. White) was convinced the RAAF should procure a British fighter aircraft (despite the fact that nothing suitable was available). Cabinet rejected the Air Board's first submission to acquire the Sabre. One reason for the rejection was because the Minister doubted the Nene engine, which had been proposed as the aircraft's power plant, would be powerful enough. Jones sought further advice on the matter and at the Air Board meeting on 19 February 1951 (at which White was present) he organised a telephone conference with Lord Hives, the managing director of Rolls Royce Ltd. Hives advised the Nene would be unsuitable for the Sabre and suggested that the Avon engine would be the ideal engine for the aircraft. White was convinced and approved the manufacture of 72 Sabre aircraft in Australia.⁹⁵ CAC eventually built 112 Sabres and the aircraft served with the RAAF until 1971.

At the same time the Sabre was being built, CAC also designed and built the Winjeel trainer. Despite objections from the Government about the aircraft's cost and the fact it was not British, Jones placed the initial development and purchasing orders for the Winjeel with CAC. He encountered a few problems in placing these orders as the Menzies government, with their strong leanings towards all things British, had expressed a preference for the Provost aircraft.⁹⁶ Never the less Jones persisted with his belief in Australian aircraft production and his view that the Winjeel was a superior design. His persistence paid off and CAC eventually delivered 64 Winjeels to the RAAF. The other major aircraft acquisition Jones presided over was the Lockheed P-2V Neptune long range maritime patrol aircraft (LRMP), which he

⁹⁵ RHS Air Board Minute *Sabre Aircraft*. February 19, 1951. Ironically, the RAF was without a locally developed fighter aircraft and it eventually acquired 430 F-86 Sabres, which served with 12 squadrons between Jan 1953 and June 1956, when they were replaced with Hawker Hunters. J.W.R. Taylor *Aircraft of the RAF. A Pictorial Record 1918 – 1978*. Macdonald and Jane's, London, UK, 1978. p. 132.

ordered in 1951. The first Neptunes were delivered to the RAAF after Jones retired from the Service.

Retirement

While Jones knew nothing of the plans to appoint him as CAS, it is likely, however, that he must have been able to guess there were moves afoot for his retirement. Labor, while they were still in Government in the late 1940s, had been keen to apply a rotation policy for senior RAAF officers. A similar policy was also mooted for the Army. In fact, there had been no objection from that Service to a proposal for the transfer of officers (irrespective of their seniority) from the position of CGS to a major command appointment of similar rank. When the Government started to look into the situation with the RAAF it found that Air Board members, because of their age were not due for retirement for some time but due to their rank they had been in their positions for a long time. The Government recognised the problems associated with this (i.e. the possibility of senior officers becoming out of touch with the day-to-day running of the Service) and to overcome the stultifying atmosphere at RAAF HQ, the Minister for Defence considered it was essential for senior officers to be rotated through command as well as administrative positions. Jones agreed with the rotation initiative, stating it was in the interests of the Service that Air Board members should not hold their positions for too long and he advised the Government:

In my opinion a period of approximately five years should be the aim for Board appointments. They should be interchanged with officers holding senior commands thereby introducing fresh experience and new ideas on higher policy matters.⁹⁷

In October 1948 Drakeford proposed that Air Board and senior command appointments (ie those at Air Vice-Marshal level) be for a period of no longer than

⁹⁶ NLA Audio tape TRC 712 Sir George Jones. Interviewed by Fred Morton, c 1976.

four years. However, this idea ran into problems straight away as CAS was the RAAF's only Air Marshal there was no position into which he could be transferred; and because of the specialised natures of the duties of the Air Members for Supply and Equipment (AMSE) and Technical Services (AMTS), it was claimed they could not be rotated to other positions. The alternative to rotation for these three officers was "their retirement would appear to be the most logical course to follow."⁹⁸ The Labor government was voted from office before the proposal took effect.

The incoming Prime Minister, Menzies, and the new Minister for Air, Thomas White, had criticised in private, the poor quality of the RAAF's senior officers in general and Jones in particular. After taking over the Ministry, White's early task was to attempt to reorganise the upper echelons of the RAAF, starting with CAS. His Government's aim was to replace Jones with an RAF officer. Menzies initially started negotiations to obtain a suitable officer, with the British Air Ministry and RAF during his visit to the UK in early 1950.⁹⁹

The Air Ministry initially did not support the idea, basing their disagreement on comments made by the RAF's Inspector-General (I-G) who had recently carried out an inspection of the RAAF. The I-G reported back to his chief, Marshal of the RAF Sir John Slessor, stating while Jones and other senior RAAF officers were delighted to see a senior RAF officer in Australia there was a view in some quarters that the inspection was made with the aim of making drastic recommendations on the Service's senior appointments. Many of the senior RAAF officers retained negative memories of the outcomes of the visit by Sir Edward Ellington in 1938.

⁹⁷ NLA MS9148 *Papers of Sir Thomas White*. Folder MS9148/9/1. Minute from Secretary to Minister. *Policy Rotation of Higher Appointments in R.A.A.F.* 10 October 1950.

⁹⁸ NLA MS9148. Folder MS9148/9/1. Minute from Secretary to Minister. *Policy Rotation of Higher Appointments in R.A.A.F.* 10 October 1950. It is not known whether, at this time, the Government considered an overseas placement or temporary transfer for Jones or the other Air Board members.

White was advised that the I-G considered it to be most unwise for the Air Ministry to comment or make suggestions on Australia's next CAS. The Air Ministry advised White that the appointment of an RAF officer to head the RAAF:

Might do more harm than good, and that the possible increase in efficiency of the R.A.A.F. would be more than offset by causing bad feeling between the R.A.F. and R.A.A.F., which I am sure you would wish to avoid.

I hope, therefore, you will agree not to pursue the matter further.¹⁰⁰

The Government was not going to take 'no' for an answer but at the same time they were faced with another problem. They had to find alternative employment for Jones and one possible area was a position with the Australian National Airlines Commission. The chairmanship was vacant and White's first choice for the position, Sir Keith Smith, was unable to accept it due to other commitments. Menzies was scheduled to make another visit to the UK in early 1951 and White reasoned if Jones was given a new job quickly (i.e. a position with the Airlines Commission), the CAS position would be vacant before Menzies went overseas and the PM would have been in a better position to make approaches personally to the Air Ministry or Slessor for an RAF officer.¹⁰¹

White continued to press the Air Ministry himself, claiming the hostilities in Korea and Malaya and the looming Cold War position made the need for an RAF officer even more urgent.¹⁰² The Minister also had second thoughts on Jones' future employment, and advised Menzies it would be better to appoint the Air Marshal to

⁹⁹ Alan Stephens Going Solo. AGPS, Canberra, 1995. p. 73. Alan Stephens Power Plus Attitude. p. 135.

¹⁰⁰ NLA MS9148. Folder MS9148/9/1. Letter from A. Henderson, Air Ministry, to White. 20 June 1950.

¹⁰¹ NLA MS9148 Folder MS9148/9/1. Letter from White to Menzies. 16 December 1950.

¹⁰² NLA MS9148 Folder MS9148/9/1. Letter from White to A. Henderson, Air Ministry. 19 January 1950.

one of the ordinary commissionerships with the Australian National Airlines Commission, rather than chairman.¹⁰³

In other advice to Menzies, White reminded the PM of the staffing and promotion stagnation within the RAAF due to one CAS (Williams) being in the position for 18 years and Jones' [then] eight year term. As a remedy, White was keen to introduce the four year term for the CAS and told the PM the selection of a suitable RAF officer should not be deferred for too long. (White based his view on the RAF's experience. He had been advised of the Air Ministry's belief in fixed term appointments of two years – plus an additional two years if the appointee proved satisfactory.) In his view, two years would be the necessary period of appointment for the imported officer.¹⁰⁴ There was still, however, the issue of what to do with Jones as the Airlines commissionership did not eventuate. As an Air Marshal there was no other RAAF position for him to be rotated into. White suggested a transfer to the RAF but considered it unlikely. So retirement was the only solution. It is surprising that Jones, with almost ten years experience in dealing with politicians and senior public servants had not managed to engineer himself a position somewhere within the Federal Bureaucracy to which he could have been appointed. There is no mention in any of his papers or writings of when and how he planned for retirement (other than his comment to MacMahon, after the decision was made, that he expected to be retired). We may wonder whether he really expected that he would remain in the CAS position until he reached the mandatory retirement age. Jones, however, had seen that Williams had been appointed as head of the civil aviation authority and based on this he would have had good reason to expect a similar appointment for himself.

¹⁰³ NLA MS9148. Folder MS9148/9/1. Letter from White to Menzies. 22 January 1951.

¹⁰⁴ NLA MS9148. Folder MS9148/9/1. Letter from White to Menzies. 22 January 1951.

The Australian Government continued to pester the British Government for an officer. The Air Ministry eventually agreed to the appointment of Air Vice-Marshal Sir Donald Hardman to the CAS position. The Australian Government's initial task for Hardman was for him to conduct an inspection and to submit a report on the RAAF. He was then to occupy the position of CAS for two years.¹⁰⁵ On his appointment as CAS, Hardman was made an acting Air Marshal. He was promoted to this rank in July 1952.¹⁰⁶

White himself had a job change and was appointed Australian High Commissioner to the UK during 1951. He was succeeded as Minister for Air by William McMahon. White recommended to McMahon to keep pushing for the rotation of senior RAAF officers. He claimed the usefulness of the Air Board had been nullified by the long tenure of some of its members. White also gave his opinion on senior RAAF officers and their suitability for further employment. Jones, he considered, had a good knowledge of the RAAF and Service matters generally and was still able to fly. Nevertheless, his opinion of Jones' personality was low and White stressed this in his advice to McMahon "in a post where imagination and personality are needed, changes should regularly be made." Hewitt "is alert and efficient" and White recommended he be appointed AMP. "Bladin has a good appearance and was a most competent flyer," but White did not consider him to be as good a staff officer as Hewitt and recommended Bladin's transfer to Southern Command. Ellis Wackett was a capable engineer but should have been transferred to some overseas post or local command. Waddy had ability and was tactful (these comments might have been expected as Waddy was White's appointee to the Air Board as the representative of the reserve forces). Scherger was seen as a potential CAS. White advised his successor "In case

¹⁰⁵ NLA MS9148. Folder MS9148/9/1. Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office. 7 August 1951.

he [Scherger] may feel peeved by the appointment of a R.A.F. Chief of Air Staff, he might well be advised how temporary this is, otherwise there might be a chance of losing him as the Americans think highly of him, and he gets on well with them.” McCauley was considered to be a good officer but the advice was that he should remain with Eastern Command. White told McMahon he could discuss these staffing arrangements quite safely with Langslow. Langslow, he advised, had been criticised in the past “when the criticism should have been directed against Drakeford, whom he had to carry for years.”¹⁰⁷

McMahon asked Jones to meet with him in his Sydney office in December 1951. McMahon told Jones that Cabinet had decided he was to be retired and replaced by an officer on secondment from the RAF. Jones simply replied “Yes. I’ve been expecting that.” McMahon admitted that Menzies had guessed Jones would give such a reply.¹⁰⁸

Jones’ retirement stirred up disagreement in Federal Parliament. The Labor Opposition claimed the Government’s action in replacing Jones was “rather a cavalier way of dealing with an officer of high rank.” They considered the replacement of an Australian officer by one from Britain to be a step backwards to the days when Australia was a British colony. The Opposition claimed there were Australians who could have filled the CAS position “had they been sent overseas to gain greater experience,” and F.R.W. Scherger and J.P.J. McCauley were nominated as two such officers.¹⁰⁹ One wonders why the Labor Party, when it was in government, did not take the initiative and post those officers to positions where they could have broadened their experience.

¹⁰⁶ C.D. Coulthard-Clark *Air Marshals of the Royal Australian Air Force 1935 – 1995*. p. 40.

¹⁰⁷ NLA MS9148. Folder MS9148/9/1. Letter from White to McMahon. 31 August 1951

¹⁰⁸ G. Jones, autobiography. p. 146.

¹⁰⁹ CPD Representatives, 11 October 1951. pp. 595 – 596.

McMahon replied for the Government. He spoke of his discussions with Jones, claiming CAS told him he believed Chiefs of Staff should be in office for a limited time. Jones, he claimed, added that it was not for him to make recommendations, it was for the Government to decide on appointments. McMahon, adopting White's advice, told the Parliament he considered the ideal duration for a Chief of Staff position to be four years. He added it would be in the best interests of the Service for Jones to be retired. Jones, he stated, had displayed no bitterness over the decision "because he realised that a wise decision had been made." The Minister explained an Australian was not appointed for the simple reason that it was believed better to bring into the country, for two years, a man with the necessary experience for the job. McMahon then fell back on to the excuse given by a previous conservative government when it had bypassed Australian officers and appointed Burnett—he claimed there was no one in Australia with the necessary qualifications. McMahon considered the choice of an RAF officer to be in the best interests of the RAAF.¹¹⁰

Hardman arrived in Australia in early 1952 and immediately set out on an Australia wide inspection of the RAAF, accompanied by Jones. The trip ended in Canberra, where both officers met with Menzies. Jones claims the PM displayed surprise when Hardman reported the RAAF to be in good shape and a going concern. Jones then spoke privately with Menzies, stating that he never sought to be CAS and had the command positions been reversed, he would have served Bostock loyally.¹¹¹ Despite Jones' claims that Hardman found the RAAF to be in good shape, soon after the latter took over the position of CAS he set about improving the relationship between the RAAF and the Department of Air and he embarked on a twelve month

¹¹⁰ CPD Representatives, 11 October 1951. p. 597. One of the Government's aims was a re-organisation of the RAAF. In light of this McMahon was correct in his claim about the lack of experience in RAAF officers.

¹¹¹ G. Jones, autobiography. p. 147.

reorganisation of the Service that included the adoption of Jones' plan for decentralisation, a reform of the Air Board (including a definition of the role of the Secretary of the Department of Air), and a restructuring of the Service into three functional commands—Home, Training and Maintenance. To overcome the problems of the divided command arrangements, Hardman arranged that in the event of RAAF units being deployed overseas, under a Supreme Commander, the AOC of those units was to be given warranted powers fully set out by CAS. Thus the AOC would have direct access to the Supreme Commander and would act under his command but at the same time would not be independent from CAS.¹¹²

On 18 January 1952 Air Marshal Jones took part in his last public function as CAS and one of his last official duties before leaving office. He took the salute at a passing out parade of 450 national service trainees at Laverton. The trainees were from units based at the East Sale flying school, the Ballarat radio school, the Point Cook Training Group and Frognall communications school.¹¹³

The Age reported that Jones told the trainees the future security of Australia rested in their hands. They would be on the RAAF reserve when they were discharged, but he hoped many of them would join the active Citizen Air Force. The newspaper noted "The parade was a brilliant finale for one of Australia's brilliant officers. Here were 450 young men, trained for only six months, but neatly efficient as they marched past a man who had worked himself through the ranks of the air force to its highest post. Air Marshal Jones commended them on their bearing and efficiency, and after the parade dropped into the afternoon tea party the trainees provided for their relatives and friends."¹¹⁴

¹¹² J McCarthy Air Power and Australian Defence: A Study in Imperial Relations. PhD thesis, November 1971. pp 331 - 332 and 336.

¹¹³ *Air Chief's last parade* in Melbourne Herald. 17 January 1952.

¹¹⁴ *Air Chief Takes Salute at His Last Big Parade* in The Age. 19 January 1952

At the time of Jones' retirement the Minister for Air asked his Department whether there was a formal ceremony that should be conducted to mark Jones' departure from the Service. That is "some formal ceremony at Point Cook at which his flag could be officially hauled down and he could be formally honoured on his termination of office."¹¹⁵ The Department considered the proposal and then rejected it, advising that there was no tradition associated with the relinquishment of the CAS position. Things were different in the Navy where a departing Admiral would have his flag hauled down and the incoming Admiral would have his raised. Furthermore the idea of a parade had been discussed with Jones but it was decided not to proceed as there was insufficient time to make the appropriate arrangements before Hardman's arrival. Therefore it was considered that no further action apart from a press statement by the Minister for Defence and a letter of acknowledgment by the Prime Minister was appropriate.¹¹⁶

Jones departure ceremonies included a formal farewell dinner given by the Service as a whole at a dining-in night at the Officers' Mess at Point Cook on 31 January 1952.¹¹⁷ Guests at the dinner included Hewitt, Bladin, Charlesworth and McCauley.¹¹⁸ Other celebrations included a buffet dinner given by the Headquarters Mess at St Kilda Road, Melbourne and a dinner at the Australia Club in Melbourne. The latter celebration was attended by Menzies and other prominent entities such as Essington-Lewis and Hardman. In his speech to the assembled dignitaries Jones said that his two greatest achievements were the organisation of EATS and the expansion of the

¹¹⁵ NAA A705/1/163/39/183 *Jones G Air Marshal. Letter of Appreciation of Service on His Retirement.* Minute from Minister for Air to Secretary Dept of Air. 9 February 1952.

¹¹⁶ NAA A705/1/163/39/183. Minute from Secretary Dept of Air to Minister for Air. 15 February 1952.

¹¹⁷ RHS *George Jones file*. "Dinner to Air Marshal G. Jones, CB, CBE, DFC, on his retirement from the Service" menu.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Mrs Anne Jones. 16 June 2000.

RAAF in the SWPA. After the dinner Menzies asked “If I recommend you for a knighthood, will you accept it?” Jones replied he would be proud to accept.¹¹⁹

P.A.M. McBride, the Minister for Defence, formally announced Jones’ departure from office on 8 February 1952. In his press statement he noted Jones’ distinguished First World War record; the fact that he was the last serving of the Second World War Chiefs of Staff; Jones’ role in the development of EATS; and that he was appointed CAS during a most critical stage of the war. The statement continued with:

He has served continuously in that capacity for the remainder of the War, during the period of post-war re-organisation, and more recently, during the build-up of the R.A.A.F, as part of the overall programme of Defence preparedness, including air commitments in Korea and Malaya.

Mr McBride said he wished to express the appreciation of the Government for the loyal and notable service which Air Marshal Jones had rendered this country and the contribution he had made to the development of the R.A.A.F. during the momentous and crucial period of its’ history. The Minister said that in his new sphere in the Aircraft Industry, Air Marshal Jones would no doubt continue to be closely associated with the R.A.A.F. in the production of its material requirements.¹²⁰

McMahon drafted a letter of appreciation to Jones to be sent under the Prime Minister’s signature. In his covering note to Menzies, McMahon wrote that Jones had “filled the position of Chief of Air Staff with distinction and outstanding devotion to duty.” It was therefore appropriate that the Prime Minister should send Jones a letter “expressing the appreciation of the Government for his notable and loyal service and the contribution he made to the air defence of his country.”¹²¹

The letter for Menzies’ signature thanked Jones for his valuable work:

I desire to express, on behalf of the Government and myself, the appreciation felt for the notable and loyal service you have rendered. Your valuable contribution to the air defence of this country during

¹¹⁹ G. Jones, autobiography. p. 147.

¹²⁰ NAA 163/39/183. Statement by the Minister for Defence (Hon P.A. McBride MP). 8 February 1952.

¹²¹ NAA 163/39/183. Minute from Minister for Air to Minister for Defence. 7 April 1952.

the period of over 9 years when you were Chief of Air Staff, and which included a most critical stage of the war and the difficult period of post-war organisation, will long be remembered.¹²²

Jones was gracious to the politician responsible for his retirement and thanked Menzies for his letter stating it would “be placed among my most cherished possessions.” He told Menzies:

It has always been a great pleasure to me to be associated with you and your government in defence matters, and I have always felt assured of kindly understanding on your part.¹²³

Despite the mutual exchange of pleasantries, there was animosity on Jones part, as he would claim later he was unpopular with some members of the Liberal Government who were suspicious of him because he had been appointed by Labor and “they imagined I had some secret affiliation with the Labor Party.”¹²⁴ One must wonder whether this was really the case. The Menzies Government was elected in 1949 and it was not until December 1951 that Jones was advised of his own retirement. If he was unpopular with certain sections of the Government, why was he not retired sooner? Even if a suitable RAF officer was unavailable in 1949 or 1950, the Menzies Government could have appointed an RAAF officer as a temporary measure, as they had done with W.H. Anderson in 1939, until such a person became available.

On 27 February 1952 the Department of Air notified the Treasury that Air Marshal Jones ceased active duty with the RAAF on 22 February 1952. The following day he was enrolled on the retired list.¹²⁵ In so far as remuneration went, the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Board advised the Department of Air that “approval has been

¹²² NAA 163/39/183. Letter from Menzies to Jones.

¹²³ Jones papers. Letter from Jones to Menzies. 23 April 1952.

¹²⁴ *A thunderer loses some of the old fire* in *The Herald*. 8 November 1971.

¹²⁵ NAA A705/1/162/7/285. *031 Air Marshal G Jones D.F.R.B. Scheme*. Minute from Secretary Dept of Air to Assistant Secretary, Dept of the Treasury (Defence Division). 27 February 1952.

given for payment of a pension at the rate of £514.08.07 per annum on and from 23rd February, 1952.”¹²⁶

During his time in the AFC and RAAF, Jones had held 15 different ranks. In addition to the DFC and CB, he had also been awarded the 1914 – 1915 Star; the General Service Medal; the Victory Medal; the Coronation Medal; the Pacific Star; the Defence Medal; the War Medal 1939 – 1945; and the Australian Service Medal 1939 – 1945.

¹²⁶ NAA A705/1/162/7/285. Minute from Assistant Secretary, Defence Force Retirement Benefits Board to Secretary, Dept of Air. 5 March 1952.

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the hypothesis that the tenure of Air Marshal Sir George Jones as Chief of the Air Staff was beneficial rather than, as sometimes suggested, detrimental to the status and development of the RAAF. Jones served as CAS for nearly ten years and in that time headed the RAAF for most of the Second World War, its post war demobilisation and its reorganisation and re-equipping in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was the longest continuous appointment to the CAS position.

Jones' time as CAS during the Second World War was overshadowed by two events—the circumstances surrounding his appointment, and the hostile situation that existed between him and Air Vice-Marshal Bostock. Both of these events reflect the negative aspect of Jones' time as CAS and detract from his achievements during the war.

It has been claimed that Jones' appointment was a mistake, that he was a less than the perfect choice for appointment as CAS. This thesis concludes that such a claim is wrong. This thesis contends that Jones' appointment was a deliberate move on the part of the Minister for Air. Jones was not selected from “the wrong list” at a Cabinet meeting as often claimed. Jones' appointment was a political decision that stemmed from the Government's disillusionment with the RAAF high command. Two main contenders for the CAS position, Williams and Bostock, were unacceptable to the politicians, while the majority of the Service's other senior officers had been appointed to positions within the Allied Air Forces High Command. The alternative was to appoint Jones. While the appointment was planned by Drakeford it would be reasonable to assume it had Langslow's and Shedden's concurrence, both of whom would have advised their relevant Ministers if a mistake had been made. Jones was appointed by a Labor Government who

possibly saw him as ‘one of their own’—a person from a working class background. No one was more surprised than Jones himself when he received news of the appointment. He expected Bostock would be made CAS. In so far as Jones’ suitability for the position is concerned, this thesis concludes that as the CAS was to provide administrative and support functions for the RAAF’s operational arm then Jones was a good choice. He had gained considerable experience at Service administrative and support functions since his enlistment in the RAAF in 1921.

Jones was beset with problems from the start of his time as CAS. The RAAF had been divided into operational and support arms as part of a well-intentioned plan to ensure that the Australian Government maintained some control over the Service after the handing over control of its operational units to General MacArthur. Retention of the RAAF’s support functions by the Government was also necessary because of Australia’s commitment to EATS.

Jones’ initial problem was that he had no idea as to how he was going to lead the Service. He assumed office imbued with Williams’s style of management. This might have been suitable in the peace time but not in war, as control of the RAAF needed someone more flexible and with a political capability. Jones had seen and copied Williams’ management style and he proved to be inflexible when dealing with Bostock. Jones also lacked the necessary political skills to act quickly and to gain the complete support of the Australian Government and thus found himself a major player in a drawn out series of conflicts.

The divided command, as illustrated in this thesis, could have worked if the two branches of the Service had been controlled by people who were willing to co-operate

with each other. Jones, prepared to allow it work initially, became disenchanted and confrontational as the war continued because of Bostock's uncooperative attitude. Bostock was an RAAF officer and therefore owed his loyalty to the Chief of the Air Staff. He should have taken up the problems he had with the way the Service was managed with Jones or Drakeford and not with Kenney or MacArthur. He did himself and the RAAF a great disservice by allowing foreign military commanders to become involved. There was no clear winner from the Jones - Bostock feud and the role of both Air Vice-Marshals is still controversial. The outcome was a further deterioration of the Government's opinion of the RAAF high command. The Government itself was not free of blame as it failed to rectify the situation and the conflict overshadowed many of the RAAF's achievements during the Pacific War.

If Bostock had been given the administrative functions he claimed he needed he would have become the de facto CAS controlling both sides of the Service. CAS would only oversee EATS and would still need an administrative infrastructure for this task. This in turn would have led to a costly and inefficient duplication of functions.

Government indecision did not help Jones. He was under continual stress throughout the conflict with Bostock to the point where on at least one occasion considered resignation. Jones showed tremendous personal strength in maintaining the integrity of the Service and, as argued in this thesis, he really received very little help from Australian politicians. Curtin was more inclined to follow the often flawed advice provided by MacArthur. While Drakeford was responsible for Jones appointment, he could not always be seen as an ally and he took advice on Service matters from Langslow as well as Jones. Jones could not rely on Langslow for support as the Secretary pursued

an agenda of his own that appeared not always to be in the best interests of the RAAF. This in turn led to a poor relationship between the RAAF and the Department of Air that was not rectified until after Hardman's appointment as CAS.

Jones made some bad or questionable decisions as CAS. The most notable was grounding the bombers at the outset of the Tarakan operation. If this were done out of spite caused by Bostock's and Kenney's interference in the Morotai mutiny it was the action of a small minded man. The operation was a success and there appears to be no evidence that any loss of life on the part of the ground forces could be attributed to the lack of RAAF B-24s on the day of the invasion. It can be argued, however, that given the size of the RAAF force, which Bostock and Kenney had allocated to the operation, vis-à-vis the USAAF, Jones' actions probably did more to harm national prestige than to threaten the lives of Australian servicemen.

The bad decisions can be balanced by the many positive achievements, for which Jones was responsible, during the Second World War. The most notable was the growth of the RAAF, which rose from 12 squadrons to in excess of 50 operational squadrons and many hundreds of support units. Early in the war, under Jones' direction the RAAF expanded fifty fold, not only in terms of aircraft and aircrew but also in the form of air bases, schools, qualified trades people, administration staff and all the other people and establishments necessary for a large armed force. While it may have been that the RAAF could hardly been considered an operational force at the outbreak of the war, Jones as Director of Training built up a recruiting and training infrastructure (initially for EATS), which became the backbone of the vast Service. EATS, which Jones was instrumental in establishing, became Australia's major contribution to the war in Europe. The

organisation was in place when Jones became CAS and it continued vigorously and variously under his leadership. Jones' other major achievement was the acquisition of a large number of aircraft from the United States in 1944. This gave the RAAF up to date aircraft and provided the Service with its first strategic bombing capability, a capability which it continues to maintain.

Jones had broad oversight of the post war demobilisation of the RAAF. It may be claimed the role Jones played in the demobilisation was less than what might be expected of the Service chief, but the decision regarding who would preside over the initiative was made by Drakeford and Langslow. While the demobilisation took place under his oversight, Jones was more involved in the immediate post war period in planning the structure for the peace time RAAF and rationalising its high command. The retirement of senior officers was certainly controversial. It was, as Williams noted, a mean piece of Service administration but it allowed for the advancement of younger and capable men. The question this thesis states in support of the retirements is how the RAAF could have employed so many senior officers in a small post war Service? Had these officers not been retired the RAAF would have been a very top-heavy organisation, with the number of senior officer disproportional to the number of operational units.

In the post war RAAF we have an interesting situation. If it is acknowledged, as this thesis does, that Jones should have been replaced as head of the Service it is also argued here that the immediate post war years were the time of his greatest successes. The first of which was the plan for the post war RAAF. Plan D was an intelligent and well thought out approach for the structure and role of an Air Force in a country with a small

population and, at that time, a small defence budget. Plan D was another of Jones' successful legacies and formed the basis for RAAF planning for the subsequent 20 years.

The other area of success was Jones' re-equipping his Service. During this period the RAAF acquired its first jet fighter and bomber aircraft. Jones was also responsible for placing the orders for the Winjeel trainer and the Neptune maritime patrol aircraft. Both aircraft types remained in service with the RAAF for over 30 years. It has been noted that the RAAF under Jones' command did not develop a distinct air power theory. It might be argued that a unique air power theory was not developed under any subsequent CAS until the 1980s. Jones did, however, put in place a mechanism that allowed for the eventual development of such theory. That is, under his direction the RAAF established its own officer training academy and staff college.

Jones' failure during this time was not to discard the RAAF's area command structure and to adopt functional commands. We should, however, note that while Jones opposed structural change he nevertheless realised that there was a need to empower subordinate commanders and he prepared a plan for the decentralisation of RAAF Headquarters functions to area and base commanders. This plan was opposed by Langslow, keen to maintain a rigid control over financial matters, and it was shelved until Hardman was appointed CAS.

Regardless of his success, Jones should have moved from the CAS position in the post war period. His personality and lack of operational command experience made him less than the ideal leader of the post war RAAF. The Labor Government recognised the need to replace him. There were several options the Government could have exercised to move him, such as transferring him to another Air Board position, an overseas posting, or

appointment to another Government position. This thesis avers that a senior officer who had gained considerable experience as an operational commander during the Second World War (such as Scherger or Bladin) should have been appointed to replace him.

The achievements of Jones should be balanced against the negative aspects of his tenure. It has been shown personality problems made him difficult to work with. But such a comment could be true of many senior commanders. Nevertheless he did command the Royal Australian Air Force at the time of its greatest strength and in wartime. It was Jones who drove the development of the RAAF; it was Jones who successfully oversaw the training organisation, which provided aircrew not only to Europe but also to the South West Pacific. It was Jones who acquired the aircraft to equip the Bostock controlled operational squadrons.

The record of success continued in the post war years. It was Jones who planned the structure of the post war RAAF. This on any interpretation was a significant achievement. So were his successful proposals to equip the Service with modern aircraft. The chance to pursue a functional command option was certainly lost but this would have meant a major battle with Langslow and perhaps Jones felt his time and energy could be better spent elsewhere.

Jones will continue to remain a controversial figure in the history of the RAAF. What is needed is a study of Bostock as operational commander, of Drakeford as Minister for Air and of Langslow as the senior public servant in that Department. In the meantime this thesis maintains Jones was a successful Chief of the Air Staff and that his “Ten Years at the Top” bestowed considerable benefits on the RAAF.

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