

811 WIRRAWAYS ON ORDER

To Cost £8,000,000

The Federal Ministry has placed orders for more Wirraway aircraft from the Commonwealth Aircraft factory, raising the total orders now to 811 machines, costing nearly £8,000,000.

Announcing this last night, Mr. Menzies said that the new orders were in addition to those placed by the War Cabinet last week.

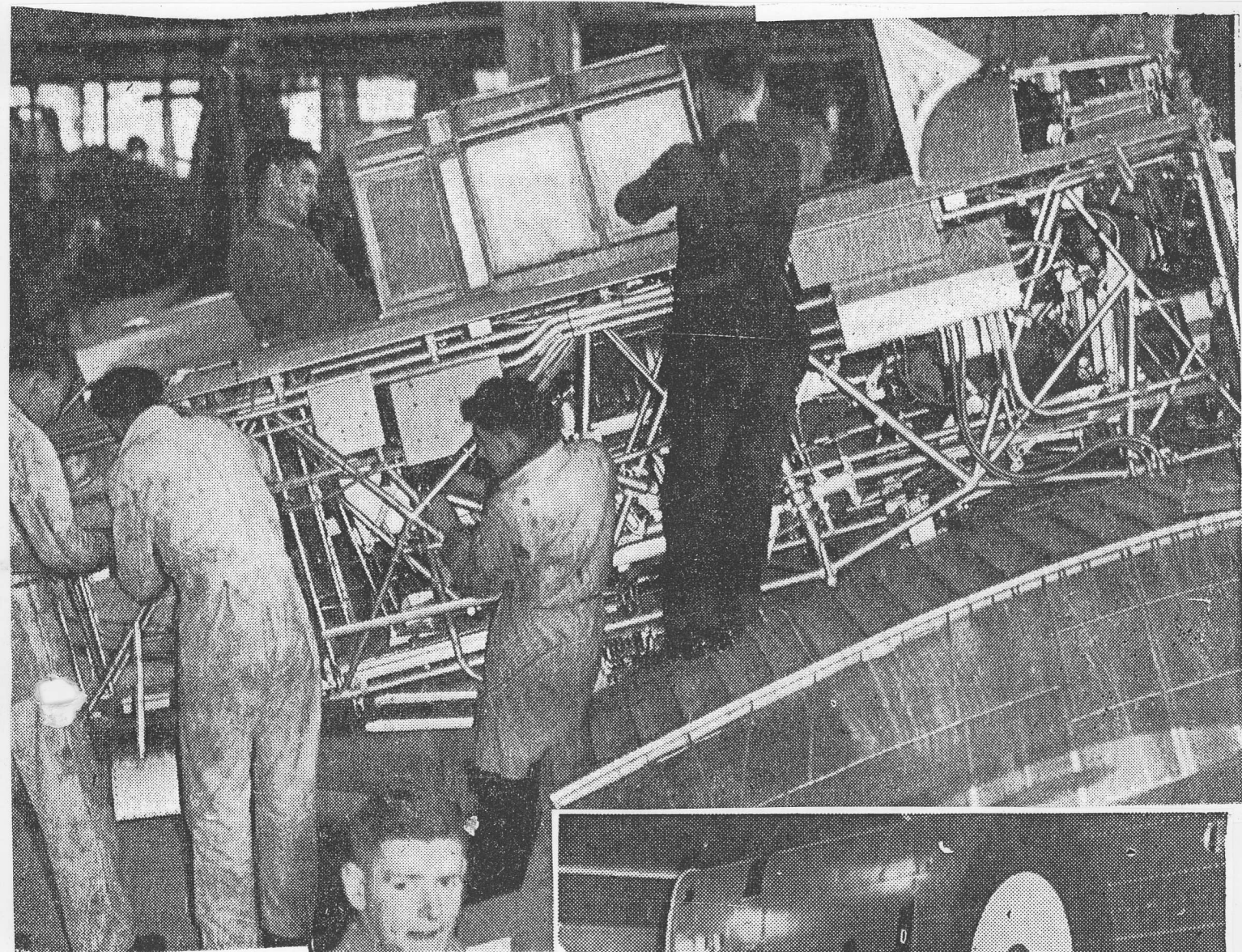
He said that the new orders had been placed because existing conditions indicated it was unlikely that aircraft promised from oversea would be available.

His announcement indicated that these Wirraways will take the place of the Fairey Battle aircraft that were to have been supplied by Britain for bombing and gunnery training, and which, since the latest developments in Europe, the British Government has indicated it is unable to supply.

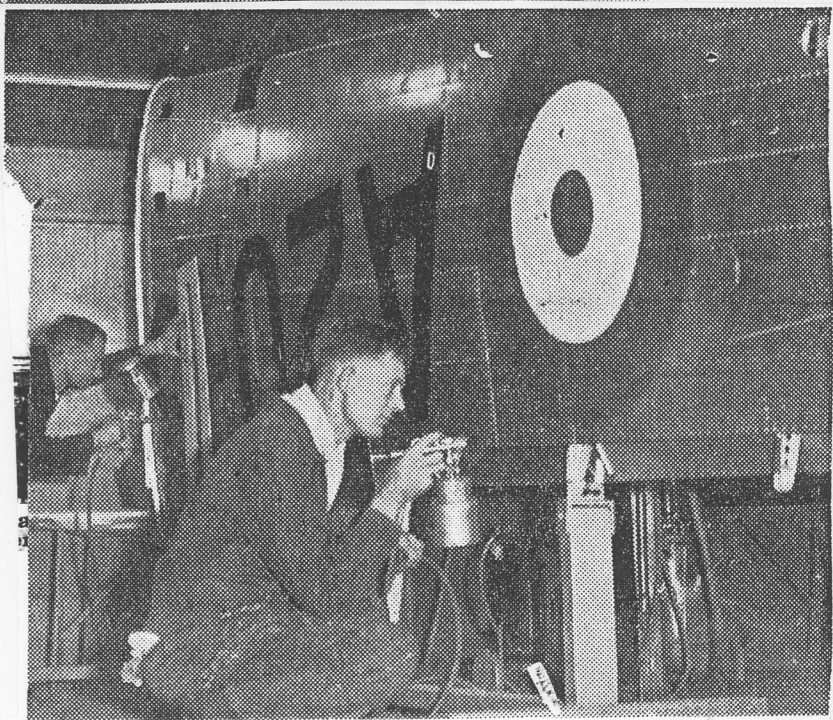
Simultaneously with this decision the Ministry has instructed its buying commission in the U.S.A. to explore even the most unlikely avenues that might supply the types of machine that Australia requires.

Results are not encouraging, but, from reports received, Ministers are hopeful that they will be able to obtain from American sources plant and equipment that will extend aircraft production in Australia.

15.6.40 THE ARGUS



QUD PAPER c.39



PRODUCTION OF Australian war planes is being accelerated at the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory. Top picture: Artisans at work on the fuselage of a Wirraway before covering with fabric. Lower picture: Spraying the R.A.A.F. identification marks on a Wirraway in the paint shop.

The B.H.P. REVIEW

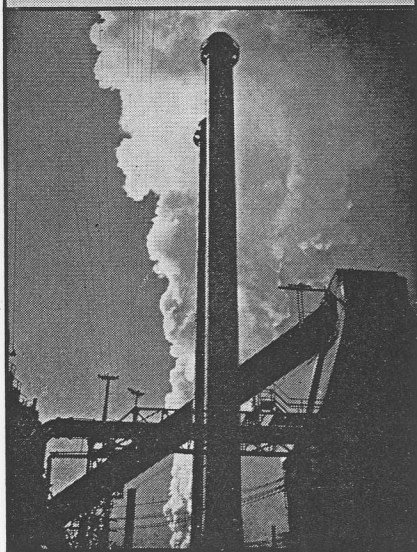
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First Delivery of Australian-Built Wirraway Fighting Planes

ON July 10, 1939, the first fighting planes built in Australia were delivered to the Royal Australian Air Force by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd., at Fishermen's Bend, Port Melbourne. In the presence of Commonwealth Ministers, Air Force officials, directors and executives of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, three Wirraways took off for Laverton, where they are undergoing service tests.

Five planes were lined up in front of the assembly department when the official party arrived at the Corporation's factory at noon.

Four of the planes took the air in an impressive formation flight, demonstrating a turn of speed and general performance that delighted those present. On this flight the machines were flown by Wing-Commander F. R. W. Scherger, Director of Training of the R.A.A.F.; Squadron Leader P. G. Heffernan (Commanding Officer, No. 1 Squadron); Flight-Lieut. R. E. Hitchcock; and the Corporation's test pilot (Flight-Lieut. H. Boss-Walker).

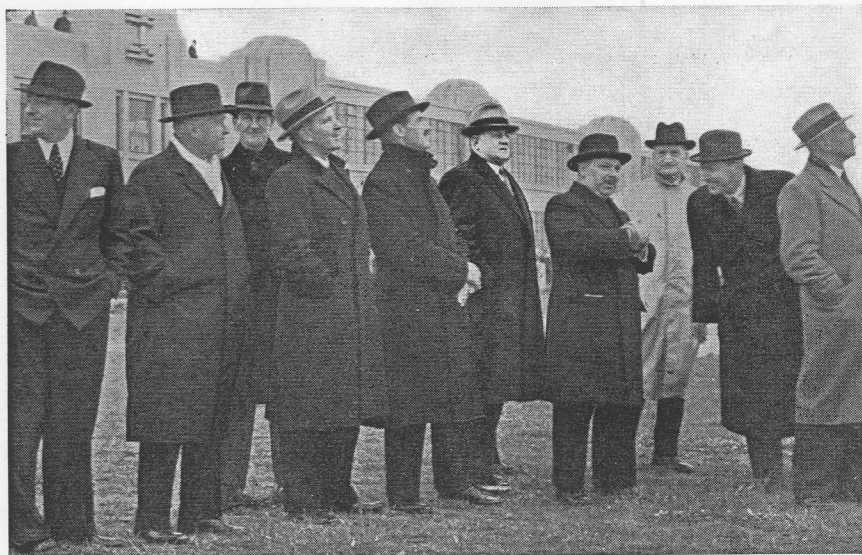
The official party included the Minister for Defence (Brigadier the Hon. G. A. Street, M.C.), who said:

"This is a memorable and historic event, and I think the production of these machines is a remarkable achievement"; the Minister for Supply and Development (the Hon. R. G. Casey, P.C., D.S.O., M.C.); the Minister for Civil Aviation (the Hon. J. V. Fairbairn); and the Assistant Minister for Supply and Development (the Hon. H. E. Holt).

Other members of the party were: Air Vice-Marshal S. J. Goble, Wing-Commanders J. C. Russell and W. H. Anderson, Major Coleman and Major Lanslow, representing the Air Board; and directors of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd., Mr. H. G. Darling (chairman), Sir Colin Fraser, Sir Lennon Raws, Messrs. Essington Lewis, F. M. Mitchell, M. L. Baillieu and L. J. Hartnett.

Prior to lunching at the factory, the official visitors were escorted by Wing-Commander L. J. Wackett (manager of the Corporation's factory) on an inspection of the engine department.

Specially strengthened for dive bombing, and armed with three machine guns, the Wirraways are capable of performing every service function.

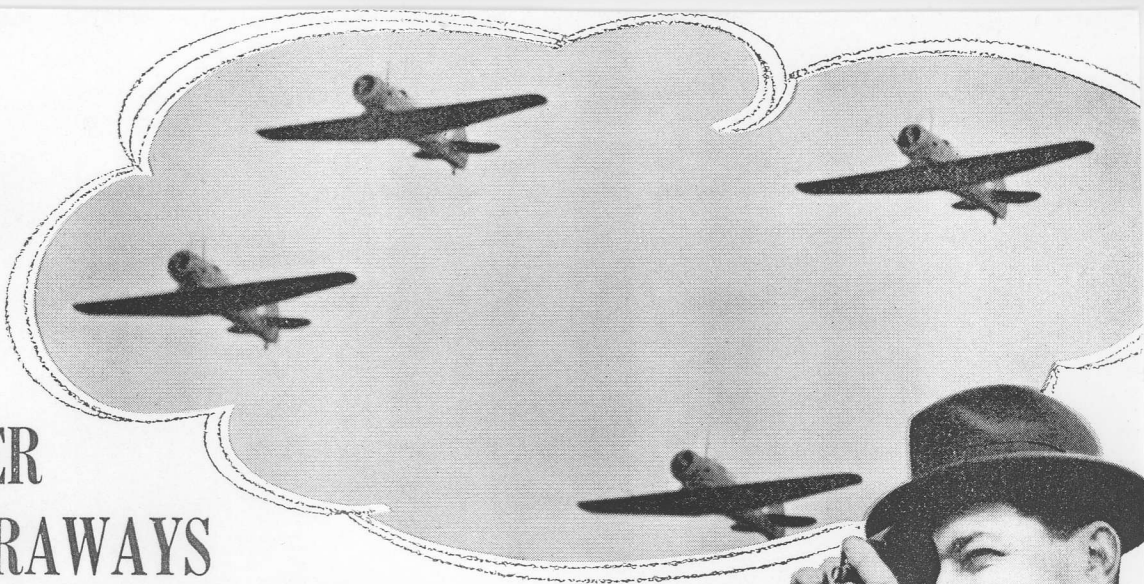


At the official handing over of the Wirraways (left to right): Messrs. M. L. Baillieu and H. G. Darling, the Hon. G. A. Street, M.C. (Minister for Defence), D. McVey (secretary of the Department of Supply and Development), the Hon. R. G. Casey (Minister for Supply and Development), Messrs. Essington Lewis and L. J. Hartnett, Sir Lennon Raws, Wing-Commander L. J. Wackett and Sir Colin Fraser.

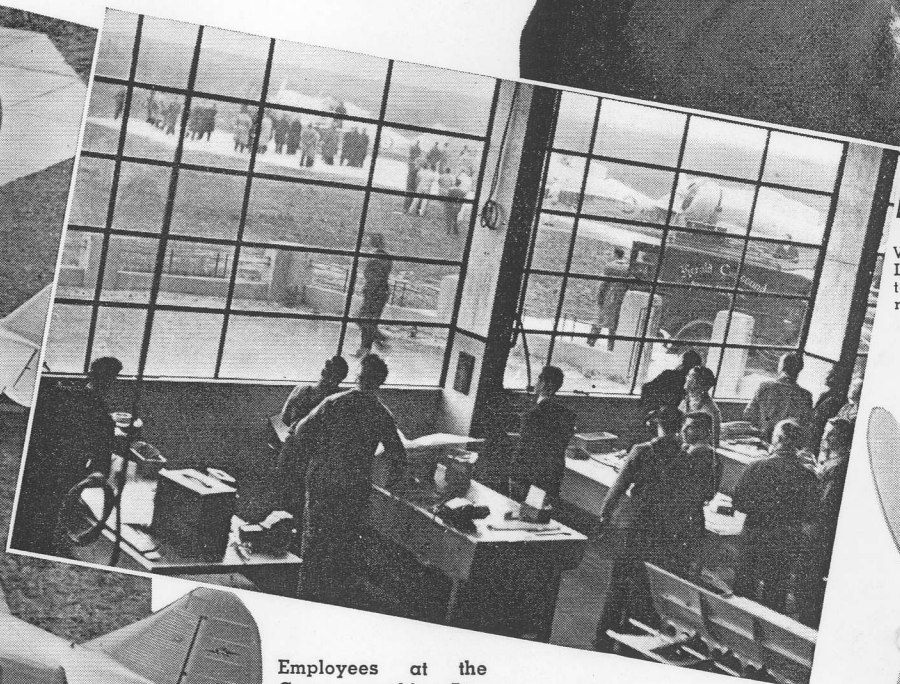
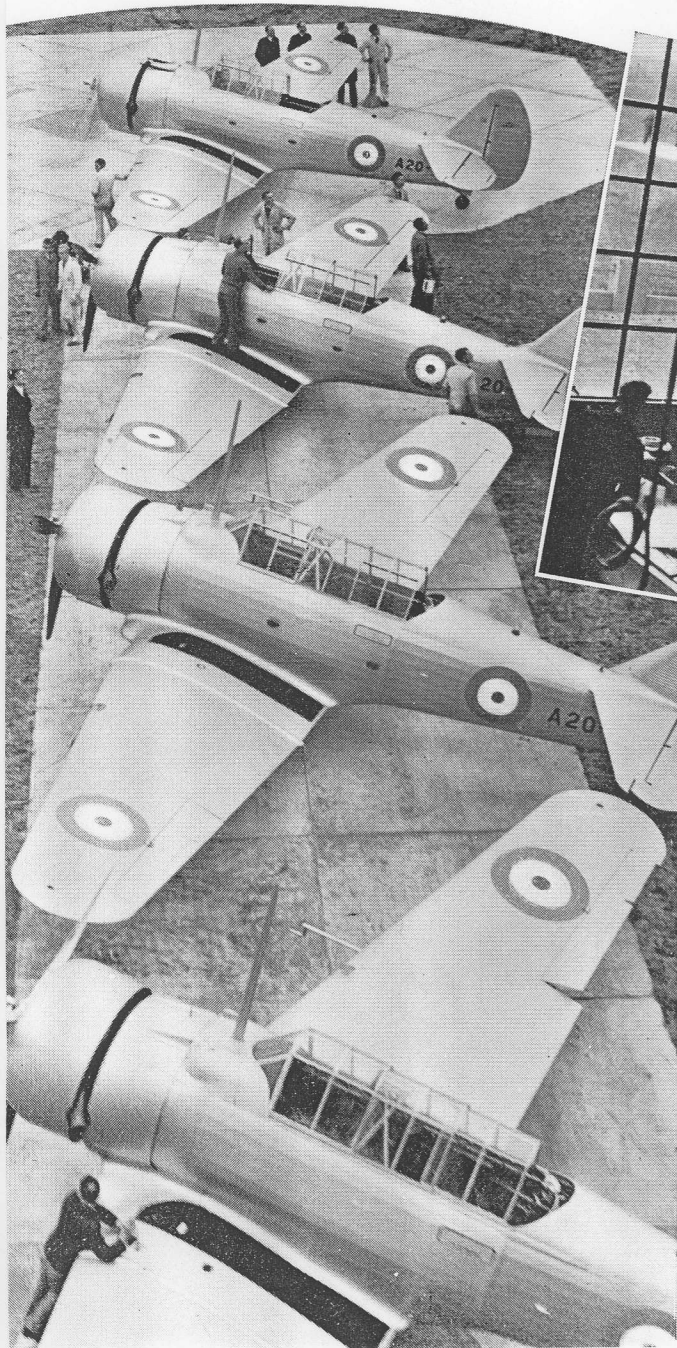
At right: Four Wirraway planes flying in formation over the testing ground.

R.A.A.F. TAKES OVER FIRST WIRRAWAYS

The photographs on this page were taken at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd. testing ground, Fishermen's Bend, Port Melbourne, on July 10, 1939, when representatives of the Commonwealth Government formally took delivery of the first three completed Australian-built Wirraway planes.



Wing-Com L. J. Wackett taking a record eve

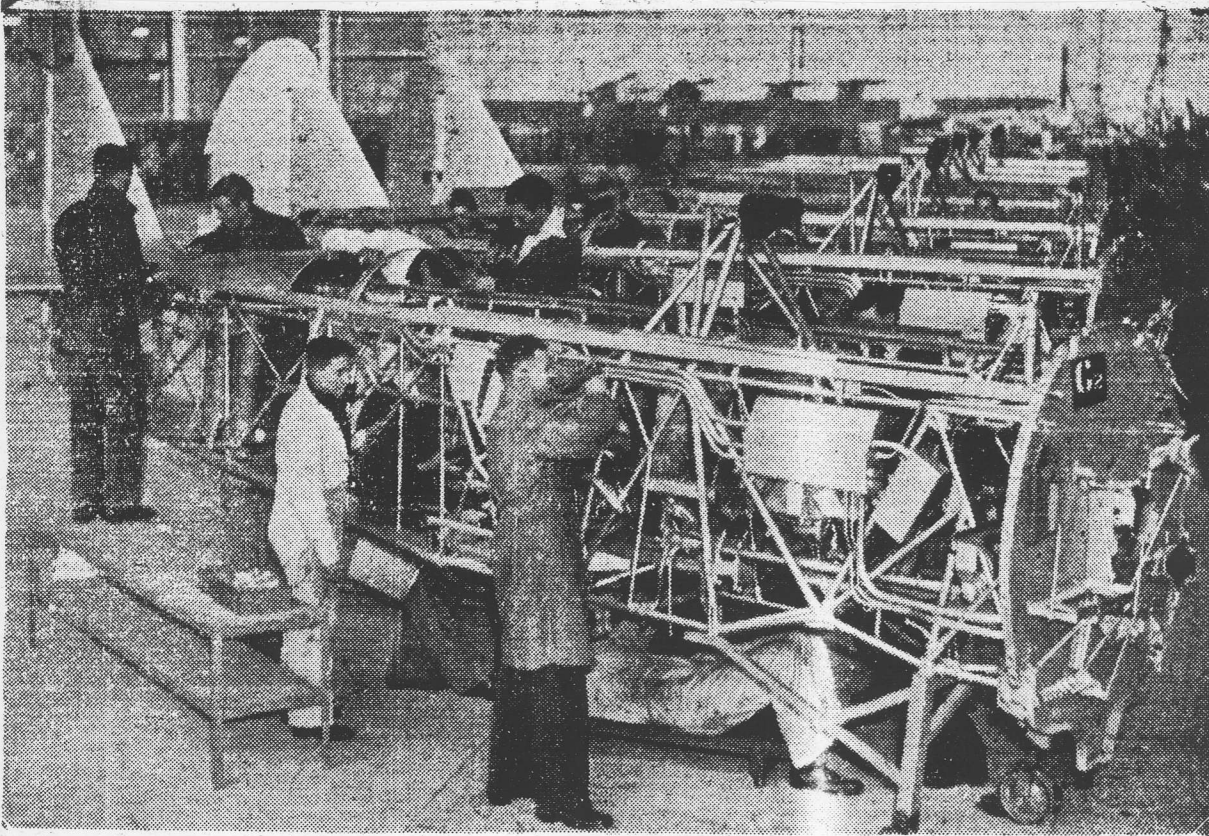


Employees at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's factory eagerly watched the performance of the planes.

At right: The Minister for Defence (Brigadier the Hon. G. A. Street) inspects one of the Wirraways with Wing-Commander L. J. Wackett (manager of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd.), at left.



At left: The four Wirraways lined up for inspection on the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's testing ground made an impressive picture. They furnish convincing proof of the functioning of Australia's newest and most complex industry.



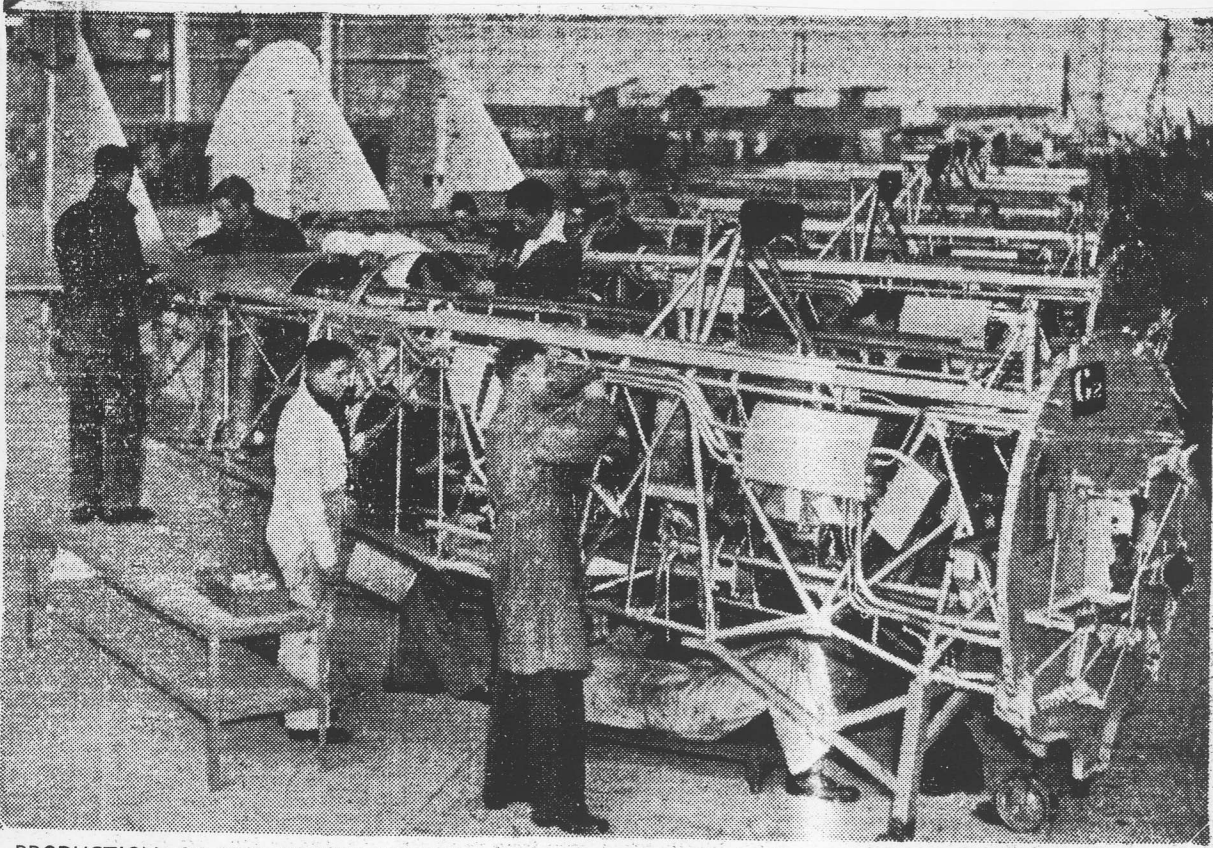
PRODUCTION OF THE REMAINING WIRRAWAYS to be delivered to the Royal Australian Air Force is well advanced. These machines, photographed yesterday on the assembly line at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's factory at Fishermen's Bend, are gradually taking shape. It is expected that the entire order for 140 machines will have been completed by the end of the year.

11.7.39: THE ARGUS.

Wirraways Tested

No time has been lost by the Royal Australian Air Force in commencing service tests with the three Wirraway machines delivered by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation. They were taken to Laverton immediately after the handing-over ceremony on Monday, and yesterday they were taken into the air by selected test pilots. The trials will be divided into two divisions to ensure that the machines are fully capable of fulfilling their functions as general purpose military aircraft. Technical experts will make detailed examinations of their flying capabilities and handling, armament, signals and navigation, and will report on their use for photography. Flying trials will include three types of loading and observations on ground handling, taking-off and landing, stability in flight and stall, diving, spinning and aerobatic tests, controllability and general performance. When the machines have been proved satisfactory, and the requisite crews trained to man them, they will be sent to Darwin to form part of the general purpose and reconnaissance squadron stationed at that base. As other aircraft are produced from the factory they will be distributed among other squadrons.

12.7.39: THE AGE



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12-7-39: THE AGE

WIRRAWAYS HANDED TO AIR FORCE

THREE MACHINES FLOWN TO LAVERTON

First Australian - Built War Planes For Service



PICTURES of three Wirraway warplanes, which were handed over to the R.A.A.F. for acceptance tests yesterday, were taken by the general manager of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (Wing-Commander L. J. Wackett) before they left Fishermen's Bend for Laverton.

THE first war planes built in Australia were delivered to the Royal Australian Air Force yesterday by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fishermen's Bend.

In the presence of Commonwealth Ministers, Air Force officials and directors of the company, three Wirraways took off for Laverton, where they will undergo service tests. Two other completed Wirraways also were inspected.

11-7-39 THE SUN



THE MINISTER FOR SUPPLY (Mr. Casey) on the wing of one of the Wirraway war planes. The pilot in this machine is Wing-Commander F. R. W. Scherger, Director of Training of the R.A.A.F.

THE five planes were lined up in front of the assembly department when the official party reached the factory. Inside the doors of the factory at least 10 other nearly-completed machines could be seen. The value of the completed planes was about £40,000.

Before three of the machines were flown to Laverton there was a demonstration flight above the factory which delighted Ministers.

Remarkable Achievement

THIS is a memorable and historic event, and I think the production of these machines is a remarkable achievement," said the Minister for Defence (Brigadier Street).

On the demonstration flight the machines took off separately, and joined up in the air to cross and re-cross the Bend and to perform aerial manoeuvres.

Ministers present in addition to Mr. Street were the Minister for Supply (Mr. Casey), the Minister for Civil Aviation (Mr. Fairbairn), and the Assistant Minister for Supply (Mr. Holt).

Air Board Represented

OTHER members of the official party included Air Vice-Marshal S. J. Goble, Wing-Commanders J. C. Russell and W. H. Anderson, Major Coleman, and Major Langslow, representing the Air Board; and Messrs. H. G. Darling, Essington Lewis, L. J. Hartnett, M. L. Baillieu, and F. M. Mitchell, and Sir Colin Fraser, Sir Lennon Raws, and Sir Alexander Stewart, directors of the company.

The general manager (Wing-Commander Wackett) guided the party.

The official party lunched at the factory, and inspected the engine department.

Next Task Beauforts

SUCCESSFUL mass-production of Wirraways by Australian craftsmen at Fishermen's Bend gave reason for confidence in the outcome of their next task—production of Bristol Beauforts, said the Minister for Supply (Mr. Casey) yesterday.

The highest praise was due to all those associated with the construction.

WIRRAWAY PLANES.

THREE ACCEPTED.

First from Melbourne Factory.

MELBOURNE, Monday.

After acceptance flights to-day, the Royal Australian Air Force took delivery of three Wirraways, the first war planes made in Australia.

The Minister for Defence, Mr. Street, said that the delivery of the full order of 137 planes should be completed on schedule within a year.

The acceptance trials were watched by an official party, which included Mr. Street and the Minister for Supply, Mr. Casey.

Five Wirraways were in line upon the tarmac at the landing field of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fishermen's Bend. After an inspection of the five machines, the party examined other machines on the production line in the factory.

Squadron-Leader F. R. W. Scherger, Director of Training of the Royal Australian Air Force, made the acceptance flight in the first Wirraway. The exacting tests to which the plane was subjected left no doubt that the machine had fulfilled the highest expectations.

"It is a delightful machine to handle, and an improvement on the N.A.33, its prototype," said Squadron-Leader Scherger, after his flight.

Wirraways were then flown solo by Squadron-Leader P. G. Heffernan, Flight-Lieutenant R. E. Hitchcock, and Flight-Lieutenant H. Boss Walker, test pilot for the corporation. These flights were followed by a formation flight of four Wirraways.

"This is a memorable and historic occasion," said Mr. Street, as he watched the Wirraways, trim and powerful, roaring overhead in perfect formation. "The production of these machines is a great tribute to Australian workmanship, and is a great technical achievement in a country which hitherto has had no industry of this type."

"EFFICIENT PRODUCTION."

"The fact that scarcely more than 15 months after the manufacture of the first components the factory should be in a position to make delivery of three fully equipped planes is striking evidence of the skill and enthusiasm of all those concerned with the inauguration of the Australian aircraft industry," said Mr. Casey, at the conclusion of the handing-over ceremony. "During my inspection of the works I saw evidence that the cycle of production is turning with smoothness and efficiency, and that the Royal Australian Air Force has now at its hand an invaluable adjunct on the supply side."

The three Wirraways left later for Laverton for Air Force tests.

11.7.39: SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

R.A.A.F. NOW HAS WIRRAWAYS

"Memorable" Day

Hurling earthward at terrific speed, climbing at a speed unexcelled by any other plane seen in this country, looping, turning, and twisting, four Australian-made Wirraway war planes yesterday gave a thrilling demonstration of their prowess.

The occasion was the handing over ceremony at the Fishermen's Bend factory of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, when the Minister for Defence (Brigadier Street), on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, inspected five Wirraways, and took delivery of the first three of these planes for the Royal Australian Air Force.

The official party which included Brigadier Street, the Minister for Supply (Mr. Casey), the Minister for Civil Aviation (Mr. Fairbairn), the Assistant Minister for Supply (Mr. Holt), departmental officials, members of the Air Board, and directors of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, later saw the three machines take off for Laverton for Air Force tests.

Five Wirraways were lined up on the tarmac at the factory's landing field when the official party arrived about noon. After these planes had been inspected an examination was made of the machines, about 10 in all, on the production line in the factory.

Squadron-Leader F. R. W. Scherger, Director of Training of the R.A.A.F., piloted the first Wirraway on its acceptance flight. The exacting tests to which the plane was subjected left no doubt in the minds of both the pilot and onlookers that the machine had fulfilled the highest expectations.

"It is a delightful machine to handle, and an improvement on the NA33, its prototype," Squadron-Leader Scherger said after his solo flight.

Wirraways were then flown solo by Squadron-Leader P. G. Heffernan, Flight-Lieut. R. E. Hitchcock, and Flight-Lieut. H. Boss-Walker (test pilot for the corporation), followed by a formation flight of four machines.

"Great Achievement"

"This is a memorable and historic occasion," Brigadier Street said as he watched the Wirraways, trim and powerful, roaring overhead in perfect formation. "Production of these machines is a great tribute to Australian workmanship—a great technical achievement in a country which hitherto has had no industry of this type."

He added that delivery of the full order of 137 planes should be completed on schedule within a year.

"The fact that scarcely more than 15 months after the manufacture of the first components, the factory should be in a position to make delivery of three fully equipped planes is striking evidence of the skill and enthusiasm of all those concerned with the inauguration of the local aircraft industry," said the Minister for Supply (Mr. Casey), at the conclusion of the function.

"During my inspection of the works I saw evidence that the cycle of production is turning with smoothness and efficiency, and that the Royal Australian Air Force has now at its hand an invaluable adjunct on the supply side."

11.7.39: THE ARGUS

AUSTRALIAN PLANES

Deliveries to the R.A.A.F.

Yesterday marked an important day in the history of Australian secondary industry in general, and aviation in particular, when the Royal Australian Air Force took delivery of the first three machines manufactured by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation. The planes, which were officially handed over to the Minister of Defence (Mr. Street), successfully performed the spectacular acceptance tests to which they were subjected.

It is expected that the total order of 132 Wirraways will be completed by July, 1940. Deliveries will be at the rate of five a month until September, when the rate will be increased.

Ministers, Air Force officers, and directors and officials of the Aircraft Corporation watched with interest the performances of the machines. For the purpose of the tests four machines were taken into the air and engaged in individual and squadron flying. Piloted by Squadron-Leader Scherger, Squadron-Leader Heffernan, and Flight-Lieutenant Hitchcock, of the R.A.A.F., and Flight-Lieutenant Boss-Walker, test pilot of the corporation, the planes performed all types of aerobatics. Technical spectators were particularly impressed with the speed with which they climbed and, at the same time, made spiral turns. After the acceptance tests the three machines for delivery left for Laverton, where an immediate start will be made with the severe service tests.

The Wirraway aircraft is a two-seater, general purpose military monoplane, fitted with a Wasp 9-cylinder engine, developing 600 horse-power at 7000 feet. It can be used for bombing, fighting, advanced training, and army co-operation work. Its speed is in excess of 200 miles an hour.

After the tests the official party made

a brief inspection of the factory, and saw about ten more machines almost completed. They spoke in the highest terms of the progress made since the commencement of operations and, in particular, the development of the engine manufacturing plant. It was as recently as February, 1937, that the construction of the factory at Fisherman's Bend was commenced, and early last year that production work was actually commenced.

The Minister of Defence (Mr. Street) described the brief ceremony as one of the most memorable and historic occasions in the history of Australia. When viewed against the formidable background of difficulties and handicaps, the corporation's record of development had probably no parallel in modern history.

The Minister of Supply (Mr. Casey), whose duties now include aircraft production, said the fact that, scarcely fifteen months after the manufacture of the first components, the factory should be in a position to make delivery of three fully equipped planes, was striking evidence of the skill and enthusiasm of all those concerned with the inauguration of the local aircraft industry. That Australian craftsmen, with the assistance of a small group of imported technicians, could have tackled the task of mass-producing the Wirraways imbued him with the fullest confidence as to the successful outcome of the production of Bristol Beaufort machines in Australia. It was a red-letter day in the annals of Australian secondary industry.

11.7.39: THE AGE

R.A.A.F. GETS FIRST WIRRAWAYS

3 Flown To Laverton

The Royal Australian Air Force took delivery today of the first war planes made in Australia.

At Fishermen's Bend factory of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, the Minister for Defence (Mr Street) and the Minister for Supply (Mr Casey) inspected five new Wirraways and saw three of them take off to fly to Laverton.

Both Ministers were delighted with the demonstration of the new planes. "A memorable and historic event," said Mr Street. "I think the production of these machines is a remarkable achievement."

THE Minister for Civil Aviation (Mr Fairbairn), who flew to the Bend in his department's new Percival plane, and the Assistant Minister for Supply (Mr Holt) also inspected the Wirraways.

When the official party reached the factory at noon, they saw the five planes lined up in front of the assembly department — shining, sleek and businesslike.

MINISTERS IN PLANES

With the general manager (Wing-Commander L. J. Wackett) as their guide, the Ministers examined the planes, sitting in the cockpits and studying such details as bomb release gear and instrument equipment.

For their benefit, one of the company's employes sat in the back seat of one plane and showed how the seat rises to enable the occupant to swivel his Lewis gun around the sky.

Wing-Commander Wackett pointed out the changes in design and construction from the American-built NA33 plane on which the Wirraway is modelled—the alterations in detail arrangement of the engine, the provision of an extra forward-firing machine gun and the stiffening of the wing to allow dive-bombing.

They were accompanied by the members of the Air Board—Air Vice-Marshal S. J. Goble, Wing-Commanders J. C. Russell and W. H. Anderson, Majors Langslow and Coleman (secretary)—and the directors of Commonwealth Aircraft—Messrs H. G. Darling, Essington Lewis, Sir Colin Fraser, Sir Lennon Raws, Sir Alexander Stewart, Messrs L. J. Hartnett, M. L. Baillieu and F. M. Mitchell.

10.7.39: THE SUN

FACTORY TOUR

If the planes lined on the concrete apron were visible proof that the country's newest and perhaps most complex industry is now functioning, the Ministers saw still more convincing proof in their short tour through the factory.

One thing could not be shown. Although the engine looked identical with the American prototype, it can produce 50 extra horse power.

Through the wide doors of the aircraft section of the factory the visitors could see a long production line on which skeleton fuselages of steel tube were being fitted with wheels, wings and engines.

At least 10 more machines seemed within sight of completion, promising a production rate of several planes a week within a few months and delivery of the full order of 137 planes—needed for re-equipment of several existing squadrons and several new ones—within a year.

Before the Ministers lunched at the factory they saw the engine department, producing—largely from Australian materials—the high-grade 600 horse-power Pratt and Whitney Wasp Junior engines that power the Wirraways.

Production in this department, a little more than a year after the factory began work, is regarded as a great technical achievement in a country which has previously possessed no comparable industry.

BEST SEEN

On their demonstration flight the Wirraways were flown by Wing-Commander F. R. W. Scherger, Director of Training of the R.A.A.F.; Squadron Leader P. G. Heffernan (Commanding Officer No. 1 Squadron), and Flight-Lieut. R. E. Hitchcock, and the company's test pilot (Flight-Lieut. H. Boss-Walker).

In formation, the low-wing planes trimly streamlined with undercarriages retracted, looked more impressive than any service machines ever seen here before. Although their performance is still undisclosed, it is known that their top speed exceeds 200 miles an hour, so that they are much faster than any previous R.A.A.F. plane.

The extreme ease of manoeuvre of the type was evident from the demonstration flight.

The planes took off individually — a formation take-off is not practicable on the extremely bumpy surface of the test drome — and joined up in the air.

Although the pilots had never flown together in similar planes before, they kept their stations perfectly, crossing and re-crossing the Bend.

THREW THEM ABOUT

THE Wirraways roared at the ground together, and broke their formation in the manoeuvre that is generally called the Prince of Wales's feathers, and then the pilots threw them about.

One plane did a full turn of an upward roll, and seemed to have something left at the end of it—something that can be done only in a really nimble aeroplane.

Technicians and laymen alike were impressed by the appearance of the planes as they dived down toward the factory.

"A barrel on a knife-edge," commented a senior R.A.F. officer. "It was a perfect description of the machines, head-on."

First Wirraways

(Continued From P.1)

RIGOROUS TESTS

SPECIALLY strengthened for dive-bombing, and armed with three machine-guns, the Wirraways are capable of performing every service function.

The three machines taken to Laverton included the first built, which was flown for the first time on March 27. Since then it has gone through its long programme of manufacturer's tests, and has been modified in a few small details.

It, and the two others, will spend the next few weeks in the hands of R.A.A.F. test pilots and technical experts, undergoing the rigorous acceptance tests of the Air Force.

To save time, the tests have been divided into three parts, for each of which a separate plane will be used. One will do flying and performance tests, another armament tests, and the third radio and photography tests.

When these are completed, any minor changes found advisable will be incorporated in all the other planes built. It was explained today that such changes would be only of a minor nature, concerning, perhaps, such details as the placing of cameras, radio sets, or the switches by which the bombs are electrically released.

They will not interfere with the normal flow of production through the factory, in which more than 1300 men are employed.

INDUSTRY'S GROWTH

How the Australian aircraft industry has grown from the date of the Government's decision that this country must be independent of overseas sources of war plane supply, is shown in the following time-table:—

June, 1936: Government announced that Broken Hill Pty., Broken Hill Associated Smelters and General Motors-Holdens Ltd. had formed a syndicate to manufacture planes. Orient Line, Electrolytic Zinc and Imperial Chemical Industries added later.

January, 1937: Government ordered 40 planes, of the type chosen by R.A.A.F. experts after world tour, from the £1,000,000 company that had then been formed.

February, 1937: Erection of £100,000 factory and preparation of test drome began on site at Bend, then covered by sandhills.

November, 1937: First machine tools arrived and company began to recruit skilled workmen.

April, 1938: 200 employes at work; first small part produced.

March, 1939: First Wirraway flew; 800 employes by then.

July, 1939: First three planes delivered to R.A.A.F.; two more ready for delivery as soon as Air Force wants them; factory enlarged twice; order increased to 137 planes; and more than 1200 workmen employed.

WIRRAWAYS STATION

FIRST BATCH, DARWIN

TESTS ON MONDAY

After service trials, the first batch of Wirraway warplanes for permanent duty will be flown to Darwin to join No. 12 (General Purpose) Squadron, under the command of Wing-Commander C. Eaton.

When the Defence Council adjourned yesterday the Minister for Defence (Brigadier Street) said that the first acceptance flight of the Wirraways at Fishermen's Bend next Monday would be conducted by the director of training of the Royal Australian Air Force (Wing-Commander F. R. Scherger).

The same day three of the planes would be flown to Laverton for immediate service trials.

The acceptance flights of the first machines were "type" tests to determine that the machines as a type were airworthy before the more exacting service trials were executed. The contractors' trials had already been completed in accordance with the contract.

Detailed Tests

Service trials would cover detailed tests of flying capabilities and handling, armament, signals, navigation, and photography. The flying trials would include three types of loading and would embrace observations on ground handling, taking off and landing, stability in flight and stall, diving, spinning and aerobatic tests, controllability, and general performance.

No. 12 (General Purpose) Squadron at Darwin, to which the planes would be sent, was now being temporarily accommodated at the civil aerodrome.

"The achievement of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation in getting the first Wirraway into the air within two years of turning the first sod on the site of the factory is magnificent," said Brigadier Street. "When viewed against the formidable background of difficulties and handicaps the corporation's record has probably no parallel in modern history.

"I am proud to congratulate the management and staff."

A two-seater general purpose military monoplane, the Wirraway could be used for bombing, fighting, advanced training, and army co-operation work both in the field and with the fixed coast defences.

PLANE TESTS ON MONDAY

Three Wirraways For R.A.A.F.

WING-COMMANDER F. R. SCHERGER, Director of Training of the Royal Australian Air Force, will conduct the official acceptance flight of the three Wirraway warplanes to be delivered by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fishermen's Bend on Monday, the Minister for Defence (Brigadier Street) announced yesterday.

Later in the day the aircraft will be flown to Laverton, where an immediate start will be made on intensive service trials.



Wing-Comdr. Scherger

The first batch of Wirraways to be allotted for permanent duty with a service unit would be flown to Darwin soon to form part of the equipment of No. 12 Squadron, said Mr. Street. Wirraway No. 1, the first Australian-made warplane, has been given the Service designation A20/3. This is the machine Wing-Commander Scherger will use for the acceptance flights. The other two machines to be taken over will be A20/4 and A20/5.

Trials Will Be Thorough

THE designations A20/1 and A20/2 have been given to the two planes imported from America as prototypes for the Wirraway.

The military flying trials at Laverton will include three types of loading and will embrace observations on ground handling, taking off and landing, stability in flight and stall, diving, spinning and aerobatic tests, controllability and general performance.

The Wirraway weighs 3890lb. when empty and 6353lb. when fully loaded with bombs.

6.7.39: THE SUN

WIRRAWAYS. FIRST BATCH FOR DARWIN.

Trials Next Week.

MELBOURNE, Wednesday.

The first batch of Australian-built Wirraway war planes to be allotted for permanent duty with a Royal Australian Air Force unit will be flown to Darwin to form part of the equipment of No. 12 (general purpose) Squadron.

Making this announcement to-day, the Minister for Defence, Mr. Street, said that the first acceptance flight of the Wirraways would be conducted at Fishermen's Bend on Monday by Wing Commander F. R. Scherger. Later in the day three of the aircraft would be flown to Laverton, where an immediate start would be made on the service trials.

Mr. Street said that the Wirraways could be used for bombing, fighting, advanced training, and army co-operation work, both in the field and with the fixed coast defences. The controls were duplicated, and there was a full range of instruments for blind flying in both front and rear cockpits.

EXACTING TESTS.

The acceptance flights of the first aircraft were to determine that the aircraft as a type was airworthy, before the more exacting service trials were carried out. The contractors' trials had already been completed in accordance with the contract for manufacture.

The service trials at Laverton would be of a comprehensive nature, covering detailed tests in regard to flying capabilities and handling, armament, signals, navigation, and photography.

The wide scope of the service trials would ensure full examination of all factors likely to arise in the diverse functions which the Wirraways might be called upon to undertake as a general purpose aircraft.

"The achievement of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation in getting the first Wirraway into the air within two years of the turning of the first sod on the site of the factory is magnificent," Mr. Street added. "When viewed against the formidable background of difficulties and handicaps, the corporation's record of development has probably no parallel in modern industry. I am proud to congratulate the management and staff on the success which has crowned their efforts."

6.7.39: SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

FINANCING THE WIRRAWAYS

Auditor-General's View

CANBERRA, Wednesday.—Some attention is devoted by the Auditor-General in his annual report, tabled to-day in the House of Representatives, to the contracts for the building of the Wirraway aeroplanes and to the amount of progress payments which, he says, exceed the original stated cost.

The report states that the price of the Wirraway aircraft, which in the contract placed in May, 1938, was £8098 each, was later increased to £8144 due to certain alterations required. A comprehensive pro forma contract to cover the alterations was prepared. "Many conferences and much correspondence" between representatives of the Air Board, Crown Solicitor, Contract Board and the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation were necessary, and the contract document was ready in July, 1939, for completion. Further delay had since been caused by the corporation seeking a revision of the basic price of £8144 per aircraft.

One of the clauses of the proposed contract provided for progress payments and read, "The Minister may from time to time authorise progress payments in respect of materials, equipment, fittings and articles purchased by the contractor for the purposes of the contract." Apparently, continues the report, progress payments had been made over the period April 27, 1938, to October 24 last of £400,000, up to when seventeen aircraft had been delivered. The clause in the proposed contract authorising progress payments provided that such payments be related to the value of materials, equipment, fittings and articles purchased by the contractor for the purposes of the contract. The payments authorised not only exceed that value, but exceed the amount of the original stated cost. "In the absence of a definite contract, it is clear that the costs per aircraft will much exceed the price of £8098 (afterwards increased to £8144) of the approved order. The proposal now under consideration is that payment be based on the actual cost, plus an agreed margin of profit." In September, 1938, a further order was placed with the Corporation for 'Wirraway' aircraft at £8200 each and spare engines at £2600 each. "Progress payments have been made in connection with this order. In May, 1939, a third order for 'Wirraway' aircraft at £8200 each was placed. No progress payments have been made in connection with this order. No contracts have been signed in either case."

The original contract approved by the Minister of Defence in May, 1938, was for 40 Wirraways at £8098 each, making a total of £323,920, and ten spare Pratt and Whitney engines at £2600 each, representing £26,000.

A Defence Contract 'Mistake'

Dealing with contracts for supplies for defence purposes, the Auditor-General alludes to a "mistake which

may be a costly one," in regard to the manufacture of certain dies, jigs and fixtures. The report states:—"On April 19 the Minister of Defence approved on departmental papers of expenditure estimated at £31,127 for dies, jigs and fixtures. Acting on oral instructions, the work of manufacture was commenced by the Ford Motor Co. of Aust. Pty. Ltd. in April, and written instructions to the company were issued on May 9. It was agreed after investigation, to pay the company its costs plus a profit margin of 4 per cent. Accounts have been rendered monthly, and have been subjected to departmental check. Paid accounts total £18,641 0/2, and are for costs incurred and profit margin during the months April to September, inclusive. Production practically ceased in August. Perusal of the departmental correspondence shows that, owing to changes in design, many of the dies, jigs and fixtures manufactured either in total or in part, are now unsuitable for the purpose contemplated. It is understood that much of the work was done from drawings which became out of date. New designs were in the department on July 21. The mistake, which may be a costly one, occurred apparently owing to efforts to hasten the commencement of production and to misunderstandings between the authorities responsible for placing the order. A departmental officer will survey this equipment in order that a decision might be arrived at in respect of its disposal."

7.12.39: THE AGE

WAR CABINET ACTS

More Wirraways

Approval of the purchase of 100 more Wirraway war-planes and engines from the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and for laying in stocks of raw materials for 100 more planes and engines was given by the War Cabinet yesterday.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) announced after the meeting that Mr. Essington Lewis, Sir Colin Fraser, Mr. Harold Clapp, and representatives of the Supply Department and Air Force had attended the Cabinet meeting to discuss plans for the local manufacture of twin-row Wasp engines.

23.12.39: THE ARGUS

Australia to Make Fighting Planes

CANBERRA, September 1. Fighting planes are to be manufactured at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation factory at Fishermen's Bend, Victoria. The first order will be lodged with the corporation on completion of the 40 Wirraway training planes at present being built for the Defence Department.

This will mean the cancellation of the order which the Federal Government had intended to lodge early next year for 60 or 70 additional Wirraways.

In reaching this decision the Federal Government has been influenced by a statement of the British expert, Sid Edward Ellington, in his report on the R.A.A.F. to the Prime Minister (Mr. J. A. Lyons), to the effect that the Wirraway has insufficient speed for a fighter, but is quite suitable for training. If it is found that the addition of the latest British aircraft developments will permit the production of an efficient machine, the Wirraway will be adapted for fighting purposes.

The Minister of Defence (Mr. H. V. C. Thorby) said to-day that the Federal Government had the right to alter at a moment's notice the type of machine which it had on order from the corporation. In the event of a change of materials on hand, the factory could be utilised in the manufacture of a new type of Wirraway machine. As fast as improvements came to hand, the Federal Government was in a position to adopt them. The Wirraway, added Mr. Thorby, was a very fine machine, but it was not a fighting aeroplane.

9-38 BRISBANE TELEGRAPH

Good Progress On New Planes For R.A.A.F.

MELBOURNE, January 19. The Minister for Defence (Mr. Street), after his first official visit to the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's factory today, predicted that the first Wirraway aircraft would be produced early in February. The extraordinary progress made at the factory, he said, emphasised the extent to which Australian materials could be used in aircraft production.

The plane will be the first of about 100 machines which will replace the Hawker Demons in the R.A.A.F. It is expected that all 100 planes will have been delivered by the end of this year.

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