

CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE ASSOCIATIONS

THE VIMY AWARD

Air Commodore Leonard J. Birchall 2001 Vimy Award Winner

Ottawa August 9th, 2001.

The Conference of Defence Associations Institute (CDAI) is pleased to announce that Air Commodore Leonard J. Birchall, OBE, DFC, CM, O Ont, CD, has been chosen as the recipient of the Vimy Award for 2001.

Air Commodore Birchall is a distinguished Canadian who has exhibited the highest standards of leadership throughout his career of service to Canada. The Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Arthur Eggleton will present the award on Friday, 16 November, at a mixed gala dinner at the Museum of Civilization in Hull.

Leonard Birchall, a native of Ontario, was commissioned in the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1937. In the pre-dawn hours of April 4 of 1942 Leonard Birchall, then a squadron commander, took off with his crew for an all-day patrol southeast of Ceylon. Just at the end of their patrol he sighted the Japanese Navy fleet steaming toward Ceylon preparatory to launching a surprise attack on Colombo, similar to the attack that had been carried out on Pearl Harbor. He immediately sent out a signal giving the location, speed, course, and composition of the fleet. Squadron Leader Birchall's action enabled the Island to defend itself. As a result of this action, Squadron Leader Birchall was awarded the title 'Saviour of Ceylon'. Following the war, he held many senior appointments to his retirement from the regular force in 1967. He has since held honorary appointments in the Air Reserve up until 1996. Leonard Birchall has over the years devoted himself to public service. In 1992, he took over a project to build a suitable facility that was needed for a Kingston-area Girl Guide Summer Camp, entirely at his own expense. Also, at his own expense in 1993, Leonard Birchall sent out to Sri Lanka a sea container carrying over eight tons of hospital supplies to alleviate the serious shortage of hospital supplies in that country.

The CDAI is dedicated to increasing public awareness of Canada's security situation and the vital role that is played by the Canadian Armed Forces in our society. The Institute is the sponsor of the Vimy Award. Since 1991, the Award recognizes one Canadian who has made a significant and outstanding contribution to the defence and security of our nation and the preservation of our democratic values.

Previous recipients of the Award include the Right Honourable Joe Clark, General John de Chastelain, Major-Generals Lewis MacKenzie, and Roméo Dallaire, Dr. Jack Granatstein, the Right Honourable Brian Dickson, Vice-Admiral Larry Murray, Lieutenant-General (Retd) Charles H. Belzile, and the Honourable Barnett Danson.

The Vimy Award jury was composed of the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, PC, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada; General Raymond Henault, CMM, CD, Chief of Defence Staff for the Canadian Armed Forces; Lieutenant-General (Retd) Paddy O'Donnell, CMM, CD, President of the Canadian Defence Industries Association; Lieutenant-General Charles H. Belzile, CM, CMM, CD, Chairman of the Conference of Defence Associations; and Lieutenant-General (Retd) Richard J. Evraire, CMM, CD, President of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute.