

SALES RECORD: Retail chain store sales rose to an all-time peak total of \$2,353,955,000 in 1955, up 9.7 per cent from 1954's previous peak of \$2,146,635,000. Number of chains in operation increased to 496 in the year from 491 and the average number of stores to 8,274 from 8,136. Average sales per store climbed to \$285,000 from \$264,000.

Salaries and wages paid to store employees advanced 10 per cent to \$199,611,000 from \$181,509,000 and accounts outstanding at year-end rose 24 per cent to \$127,362,000 from \$102,747,000. End-of-year stocks, in stores and warehouses, were valued at \$268,953,000, up 8.1 per cent from the preceding year's total of \$248,863,000.

In the major kind of business categories all chains, except tobacco stores and stands, reported increased sales in 1955 over 1954, furniture store sales rising 24.9 per cent, household appliance and radio and music stores 16.5 per cent, women's apparel and accessories stores 12.9 per cent, hardware stores 12.8 per cent, and grocery and combination stores (largest of the chains) 11.5 per cent.

LARGE-SCALE PLAN: Details of a nationwide health and welfare plan affecting some 140,000 non-operating railway employees and their families, estimated at 500,000 in all, have been released following approval in principal of the plan by representatives of the Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, Ontario Northland, Algoma Central and Toronto Hamilton and Buffalo Railways. The unions previously had taken similar action.

The plan gives effect to provisions of the master agreement signed by the Railways and 15 non-operating unions last spring and will cost some \$13,500,000 annually shared equally by the railways and contributing employees. Since signing the master agreement six months ago a joint union-management committee has worked continuously to produce a satisfactory scheme.

The joint union-management committee has listed these particulars:

1. The plan starts January 1, 1957, and applies to non-operating employees subject to the master agreement who have completed sixty calendar days of service by that date. Otherwise employees will be covered from the first of the month after completion of sixty calendar days of service.

2. As provided in the master agreement \$4.25 per month will be deducted from the employees' pay. The railways will contribute \$4.25 per month, per employee.

3. The plan provides group life insurance in the amount of \$500 and weekly compensation for loss of income through sickness or non-occupational accident to a maximum of \$40 a week for employees only. These benefits, applicable throughout Canada are to be underwritten by the Sun Life Assurance Company, in association with the Great-West Life, Canada

Life, London Life, Mutual Life and Confederation Life. These companies were successful in competitive bidding.

4. Hospital and surgical benefits are made available to employees and their dependents and are underwritten by Blue Cross and Trans-Canada Medical Plans as a result of competitive bidding. In Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, where statutory provincial hospital plans operate, employees and their dependents will be provided with comprehensive medical and surgical benefits.

5. Canadian Pacific Employees in British Columbia will continue to have surgical and comprehensive medical benefits provided by the Canadian Pacific Employees Medical Association of British Columbia and premiums covering these benefits will be paid to the Association.

MALAYAN SURVEY: More than 35,000 miles of hitherto unexplored jungle in Malaya are being surveyed for mineral deposits in the first major Colombo Plan project undertaken by Canada in that country. The cost of the survey is expected to be about \$400,000 and will be almost equally divided between Canada and Malaya.

Malaya is already a major source of the world's tin and officials hope that this aerial search will lead to the discovery of important new deposits of tin as well as of other minerals, such as tungsten and ilmenite. The survey is being made with an aircraft specially outfitted as a "flying laboratory". The instruments include an airborne magnetometer, which has helped to uncover many large mineral deposits in Canada, and an airborne scintillation counter, which has been widely used in the search for uranium in the Canadian Shield.

During the survey of Malaya large areas in the states of Kedah, Perak and Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca, Johore, Pahang and Trengganu will be explored. The bases for the first phase of the project, covering three western areas, is Kuala Lumpur. After this phase has been completed the Canadian team will move to Singapore which will be the operations base for the survey of three eastern areas.

Much of the area to be explored is remote and inaccessible virgin jungle which could not be surveyed economically by conventional ground reconnaissance. Aerial photos will be used in preparing the survey flight maps and in making the survey the plane will fly at a height of 500 feet above the jungle. Intensive ground studies will then be made of those areas which the aerial survey indicates may contain important mineral deposits.

Technical assistance for Malaya up to now has included both training in Canada for seven trainees, three of whom are in Canada now, and the sending to Malaya of fifteen experts in various fields. Several of these experts are at present in Kuala Lumpur.