

RCAF STRENGTH OVER 17,000: The Royal Canadian Air Force looked back today on 1949 as a turning point in its postwar progress. The Air Force was able for the first time to turn its attention seriously to building up the operational element of the Force. This would have been impossible had not emphasis been placed on building a supporting framework immediately following the war, an RCAF year-end news release reports.

The training programme is well established and recruiting is being continued. Strength at the year's end is estimated at more than 17,000 (based on estimate for month of December), an encouraging increase over the 13,852 total for the beginning of the year. Presently approved establishment for the RCAF is 18,278.

Flying time--one of the most significant factors in assessing actual operations of any air force--was up nearly 60 per cent over last year's figures. RCAF planes flew a total of approximately 180,000 hours during 1949 (based on estimate for month of December), majority of this time being rolled up by training flights, and transport and photo survey operations.

Important strides in building the operational element of the Service were made. Negotiations for manufacture of the American F-86A jet fighter were completed, and an initial order for 100 was placed with Canadair Ltd. in Montreal. This aircraft, which holds the world's official speed record, will serve as the RCAF's standard day fighter.

Excellent headway was made on the CF-100, the new all-weather jet fighter being built by A.V. Roe in Toronto for the RCAF. The first test flight of the aircraft was expected to take place shortly before the end of the year or early in 1950.

RETAIL SALES HIGHER: Showing one of the smallest increases so far this year, the value of Canada's retail trade rose slightly more than two per cent in October over the corresponding month last year, amounting to \$696,000,000 as compared with \$682,000,000. Sales were also up slightly from the September total of \$685,000,000. The average gain in the first 10 months of this year amounted to 6.5 per cent.

Practically all trades making up the retail

sales showed evidence of moderation in October. Sales of grocery and combination stores rose 0.3 per cent in the month, but were up six per cent in the cumulative period, while country general store sales were down two per cent both in the month and 10-month period. Furniture sales were down one per cent in October, but up 0.4 per cent in the 10 months. Hardware store sales rose two per cent in October, and three per cent in the 10 months, while drug store sales were off one per cent in the month, but up four per cent in the cumulative period. Restaurant sales were up four per cent in the month and 10 months.

COAL PRODUCTION RISES: Production of coal in Canada was nine per cent higher in November than in the corresponding month last year, and was up three per cent in the first 11 months of the year. Imports were down 52 per cent in the month and 38 per cent in the cumulative period.

According to preliminary figures, the all-Canada output amounted to 2,055,800 tons in November as compared with 1,892,600 a year earlier. During the 11-month period, 17,090,600 tons were produced as against 16,610,100 in the same months last year. Imports in November decreased to 1,481,300 tons from 3,069,400 a year ago, bringing imports for the year to date to 18,517,900 tons against 29,772,000 in 1948.

REFINED PETROLEUM PRODUCTS INCREASE: Canadian production of refined petroleum products increased almost 15 per cent in July over the corresponding month last year, while in the first seven months of the year the gain was 12 per cent. Receipts of crude in the month were five per cent above July last year, and were 12 per cent higher in the cumulative period.

The month's output amounted to 8,762,900 barrels as compared with 7,623,000 in July last year. During the first seven months of this year, 49,076,300 barrels were produced as against 43,911,000 in the similar period last year. Receipts of crude in the month totalled 9,618,400 barrels compared with 9,182,200, and in the seven months amounted to 54,188,400 barrels against 48,444,600.