

ARMED FORCES REORGANIZATION YEAR

RECORD OF 1947: In the Canadian Army, Navy and Air Force alike, the past year was one of reorganization, of changeover from wartime to peacetime basis. The changeover was accomplished officially on Sept. 30, 1947, when the three Defence services were ordered to stand-down after eight years and one month of active service in World War II.

One function after another common to the Navy, Army and Air Force was amalgamated under a single Service head. This was especially true of medical and dental services and hospital accommodation, transport services, identification bureaus, provost and public relations duties. In general, the great sprawling organization that was National Defence Headquarters at the height of the changeover from war to peace was cut, molded and integrated. Now nearly all the branches, directorates, units and sub-units necessary to defence are housed in three big temporary buildings on Ottawa's Cartier Square.

SET-UP OF NEW ARMY

The strength of the Army was greater in January than it is at the present time. Speaking at a press conference a year ago, the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Brooke Claxton, gave the strength of the Army as 21,475, but intimated that approximately 9,000 soldiers were due to be released -- the majority of them by March 31, and all of them by the end of September. And that is exactly what happened. The number of men still serving in the Army is approximately 15,000. There is no mystery connected with the difference in figures, as, in addition to some 2,500 men in the Interim Force at the start of the year, many more were over-age, medically unsuited or in other ways incapable of meeting the rigid peacetime standards of enlistment. Although the strength of the peacetime Active Army was set tentatively in 1946 at 25,000, it was decided early this year to recruit not more than 75 per cent of this figure for the time being. At year's end the Army is somewhat short of its manpower requirements but recruiting continues satisfactorily.

Defence Minister Claxton, at the end of February, issued an important statement detailing the various headquarters, commands, units and schools of the Canadian Army Active Force. He said that the Army, already operating on its postwar basis, was comprised of Headquarters in Ottawa, five regional Commands which included subsidiary Area Headquarters, a Brigade Group of all arms, and some 18 corps and special schools.

CADETS' RESERVES' NEW DEAL

Both the Royal Canadian Army Cadets and the Canadian Army Reserve Force received a face-lifting during 1947.

The new deal for the cadets involved the complete reorganization of the corps so that

the old pre-war conception of cadet training solely to promote citizenship and patriotism was broadened to include, among other things, preparation for service, when old enough, in the Reserve Force. This new programme was initiated at the start of the current school year.

Much concern was shown during the year for the future of the Reserve Force and the amount provided for reserve training in the year 1947-48 estimates was more than four times that allocated in 1938-39 for the same purpose. Training facilities and syllabi were streamlined and brought up to date. Ample clothing and equipment was made available and full-time administrative and technical officers and NCOs from the Active Forces of the Navy, Army and Air Force were attached to Reserve Force units. All in all, every effort was made to lower the barriers which might have existed in the past between the Active and Reserve Forces.

JOINT AIR SCHOOL OPENED

During 1947, considerable progress was made in connection with the opening of the Joint Air School at Rivers, Man., where eventually, it is planned to train all Canadian Army and Air Force units, together with Navy personnel, in combined air operations. The school's chief task will be the training of Canada's Active Force Brigade Group for air-transported and airborne operations. Whole companies at a time will go for their complete air school training and eventually all arms will become air trained.

To further this important project, nearly 50 gliders, to be used for basic airborne instruction, have been distributed to Brigade Group units.

In November, a Special Air Service Company formed of volunteers from the Group's three infantry battalions, commenced training at Rivers. Members of the Company are being trained in parachute and glider work, demolitions, first aid and medical care, mechanical transport and small boat handling, rescue work and the evacuation of casualties. It will be permanently stationed at the Joint Air School from where any point in Canada can be reached in a matter of hours.

In the Far North, the only winter manoeuvre of any importance carried out by the Active Force during the year was Exercise "Haines" -- a tough, month-long battle between the mountainous, snow-covered country of the Whitehorse, Y.T. district and men of the PPCLI. A small but arduous scheme, Exercise "Haines" was carried out with none of the mechanical aids of former winter exercises. During the manoeuvre the men completed snowshoe hikes of eight and 10 days' duration, over 40 to 90 miles of unbroken trails, in virtually uncharted country.

The Reserve Force also held a couple of winter training exercises. These were Exercise "Husky", a 12-day winter camp conducted in the

Wainwright area in February, and Exercise "Mountain Goat". "Mountain Goat" was a hazardous six-day ski trek across the treacherous Yoho Glacier by 14 men of the Calgary Highlanders (Reserve Force).

Later on, in April, a party of Royal Canadian Engineers shoved off from Churchill on a 360 mile, six-week mapping survey of the Barren Lands in that vicinity. At one time the small force of 12 soldiers and two civilian trappers was forced to dig in and wait out a week-long blizzard before continuing the survey.

During the summer months Fort Churchill was the scene of considerable construction designed to convert the cold-weather testing station into a permanent camp. The project called for a group of married quarters, a barrack block, a hangar, a workshop, a pumphouse, a road to Lake Isobelle, the water source, and a water line from there to the camp.

In May, residents of Aklavik, N.W.T., and the Delta area of the Mackenzie River, heard the first official broadcast of the Canadian Army's station CHAK, North America's most northerly radio station. Last October the station undertook, at the request of the Department of Mines and Resources, the broadcast of a series of CBC educational programmes for the benefit of children for whom no schools are available in the district.

A second party of Army Engineers and 10 University students set out in June along the Northwest Highway System for a four-month mapping survey of the Northwest. The survey formed part of the military mapping programme of Canada's unmapped regions which was started when aerial photographs of these areas were taken by the RCAF in 1946.

Throughout the year other Army Engineers were active along the 1,200 miles of the Northwest Highway System, maintained by the Canadian Army. Operating as "trouble-shooting gangs" they built and repaired bridges, gravelled and graded the road, speedily repaired washouts that occurred, and kept the snow-blocked mountain passes open in winter.

Construction of new radio installations for the Northwest Territories and Yukon Radio System in three northern Canadian points was rushed during the summer months. New buildings were erected in Yellowknife and Hay River, N.W.T., and at Mayo, Y.T.

CANADIAN AIR FORCE CHANGES

Administration changes in the RCAF itself were announced shortly after the beginning of the new year. The five Air Commands, located at Halifax, Trenton, Ont., Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver, were consolidated into two--one at Trenton and one at Edmonton--the other three becoming Group Headquarters. The changes were made to consolidate administrative staff services to ensure economical supervision of the Air Force in its peacetime role.

The last year was a busy one for the RCAF's training establishments. Ground training swung into full stride during the year and flying training commenced, for the first time since

the war. Schools at Trenton, Aylmer, Camp Borden, Rockcliffe, Clinton, and Centralia worked to capacity instructing new recruits in the skills of the various Air Force trades, and at the same time giving additional courses to many veteran airmen who had re-engaged in the peacetime Air Force. Ground schools were run for officers also, and large classes were graduated by No. 1 KTS a school of administration for junior officers, most of whom had no chance during their wartime flying days to learn the administrative jobs required of the peacetime officer. At the same time senior officers were busy at the Royal Canadian Air Force Staff College, Toronto.

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PLAN

Initiated during the year was the RCAF's Summer Employment Plan, under which veteran officers now attending university were brought back into uniform, to work and train with the Air Force during the Summer months. Eighty-four such students from leading Canadian universities returned on a Reserve basis, and were engaged in medical and technical research and survey work. The plan is designed to train the students in the various specialist branches of the Service during their university careers, and the type of work done by each fits in as closely as possible with the course taken by the student. Qualified students may be offered commissions in the RCAF upon completion of their professional training.

Flying training stations saw increased activity during the year, as new entries began aircrew training. The first class of 21 young flight cadets started their careers as aircrew officers during the Autumn, having qualified for short service commissions in the RCAF. Out of the 21, 15 were former airmen who had been selected from the ranks after enlisting in 1946, carrying out previous announcements that members of the ranks would not be overlooked when selections for aircrew training were made. The first group, small by comparison with wartime but to be followed by further intakes at regular intervals, passed through No. 1 Manning Depot, Toronto, to Flying Training School, Centralia, Ont., or to the Radar and Communications School, Clinton, depending upon whether the cadets were taking pilot or radio-navigator training. Flying began for them before the end of the year, and upon completion of their training they will become pilot officers.

TRAINING FOR UNDERGRADS

Flying training was also given to university undergraduates, who entered under the new University Summer Flying Training Scheme, which began during 1947. Thirty-six such undergraduates from 10 universities across the country took pilot or radio-officer training. Such students, after spending three summer training periods with the Air Force, and successfully finishing their university course, are offered commissions in the Regular, Auxiliary, or Reserve Air Forces.