

The R.C.N. works closely with coastal reconnaissance squadrons of the R.C.A.F. in this vital task. Every day minesweepers steam out from Canadian ports to go about their dangerous job.

Fishermen's Reserve

The West Coast of Canada, with its deep indentations and myriad small islands, presents a special problem for patrol. The mainland itself stretches 1,580 miles; the islands are another 3,980 miles -- a total of 5,560 miles to watch over. No orthodox naval force that Canada could put in the water could guard this great length of coastline. But Canada found the answer to this problem ready at hand.

In the early months of 1939, a third reserve for the Navy was formed, drawn from men in the west coast fishing industry. These men know the waters as only fishermen could. Their boats, which they brought with them into the Reserve, were built to negotiate the inlets of the coast. These craft were quite large and sturdy, and were easily converted into patrol boats.

But the Fishermen's Reserve was ready to do more than patrol work. Boats were fitted up for minesweeping, and when the war broke out this dangerous, but most essential job was undertaken by them on the west coast.

At the outbreak of war, the Royal Canadian Navy had only 16 vessels in operation, consisting of six destroyers, five minesweepers and other small vessels.

The Royal Canadian Navy now operates more than 700 vessels of the following types: destroyers, corvettes, frigates, auxiliary cruisers, minesweepers, patrol vessels and small craft fitted for the many duties of modern sea warfare. More than 250 of the 700 are fighting ships. The remainder are auxiliary vessels such as tugs and harbor craft.

Although primarily a Navy of small ships designed for convoy protection, the R.C.N. is building up a destroyer fleet which will be no small contribution to the offensive power of the United Nations.

Destroyers

A flotilla of eight Tribal class destroyers is being built for the Royal Canadian Navy. Four, built in British yards, have already been commissioned in the Canadian Naval Service and are operating with ships of the allied nations - Iroquois, Huron, Athabaskan and Haida. All four were commissioned within six months. The other four are being built in Canada. One, H.M.C.S. Micmae has already been launched.

Tribal class destroyers are the best and fastest afloat. They are heavily armed, carrying as part of their armament 4.7-inch guns. They carry a crew of 190 and have four 21-inch torpedoes.

The Royal Navy has placed four of its escort destroyers at the disposal of the R.C.N. These destroyers, which are of the River class, have been renamed Ottawa, Gatineau, Kootenay and Saskatchewan.

In January 1944 one Fleet class destroyer was commissioned with an all-Canadian crew after being refitted and converted for convoy escort and anti-submarine duties. Another will be similarly commissioned shortly to bring to six the number of used destroyers provided by the United Kingdom within a year.

Built in 1936, the Fleet destroyer, H.M.C.S. Chaudiere, has been strengthened against ice conditions and provided with the latest anti-submarine equipment. It has torpedo tubes, depth charge throwers, an anti-aircraft battery and 4.7 gun mountings.