

**FOREST FIRE-FIGHTING COSTS:** Canada's forest fire-fighting costs in 1948, amounting to more than 2½ million dollars, were the highest on record. In terms of measurable damage combined with fire-fighting cost, the loss from forest fires in 1948 was exceeded only by that of the 1941 fire season during the 20-year period for which Canada-wide records of forest fires have been compiled, according to information released on May 17 by the acting Minister of Mines and Resources, Mr. Mackinnon. The federal forest-fire statistics are prepared annually from information supplied by all provincial and federal forest-fire protection agencies in Canada.

Although the number of forest fires, 5,368, was about normal, the total area burned amounted to some 3,185,000 acres, representing an increase of 70 per cent over the average burned acreage for the previous ten years. Exceptionally dry weather over wide areas in the Great Lakes region and in central Canada during the early summer and autumn months contributed to the damage sustained.

The amount of merchantable timber on lands burned over in 1948 was equal to that used by all the pulp and paper mills in Canada for a 7½ month period, based on the average mill consumption from 1937 to 1946. Damage to timber, young growth and other property was estimated at \$5,882,000; this, however, evaluates the wood only at prevailing stumpage rates and takes no account of other losses sustained by the wood-using industries. Moreover, the figure makes no provision for damage to soil and site quality, streamflow regulation, wild life, or recreational and tourist values, none of which can be reliably appraised in terms of dollars.

Eighteen per cent of all the fires were attributed to lightning, the remaining 82 per cent being man-made and therefore preventable. Only 2 per cent resulted from deliberate incendiarism. Forty per cent of the fires were started by careless campers and smokers--an increase of 4 per cent over the previous ten-year average. Railways and settlers were the other major causes.

The above figures do not include the Yukon and Northwest Territories, in which 80 fires were reported with a total area of 121,000 acres.

**FAMILY ALLOWANCES:** When the family allowance cheques for May are issued, total payments since this program began to operate three years and 11 months ago will pass the one billion dollar mark.

This was announced on May 20 by the Minister of Health and Welfare, Mr. Martin, who pointed out that family allowance payments are now running at \$23,600,000 per month.

With the inclusion of 122,400 children from the new Province of Newfoundland, the total number of children now receiving family allowances has passed the 4,000,000 mark.

Family allowance payments in Newfoundland in April totalled \$703,856, Mr. Martin stated, and went to 45,142 families. This means an average allowance of \$15.59 per family--the highest in Canada. Nearest to the Newfoundland average is New Brunswick with \$14.96 per family.

**WORLD WHOLESALE PRICES:** Wholesale prices continued to move upward in many countries during the second half of 1948, although peak levels in others appears to have been reached or passed, according to the semi-annual report on world price movements by the Bureau of Statistics. Buyers' markets were developing in some of the major cereal products, and supply conditions eased also in a few other commodities such as rubber, tea, coffee and spices, towards the end of the year. Currency difficulties continued to have an adverse effect upon demand for commodities important in international trade.

Declines in cost-of-living series ranging from 0.2 per cent to 1.3 per cent were shown by the United States, the United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia and Norway. The United States index of the Bureau of Labour Statistics recorded a decrease in October, and continued downward, showing a net decline for the six months of 0.2 per cent. In the United Kingdom, the cost-of-living index showed a drop for July. Part of the loss was regained later, but the December level was 0.9 per cent below the June peak.

Cost-of-living advances for other countries, in many instances, were at less than half the rate shown for the second half of 1947. Increases, with a few exceptions, ranged within the limits of one per cent and four per cent. The Netherlands index of living costs in six municipalities recorded a net gain of 3.4 per cent between June and December; a rise of four per cent in November and December followed the announcement of a 40 per cent cut in food subsidies.

#### WHOLESALE INDEX

The United States Bureau of Labour general wholesale index touched a post-war peak of 169.5 for August, but receded to 162.3 for December, to show a net decrease from June to December of 2.3 per cent. The Board of Trade wholesale price index for the United Kingdom averaged 0.6 per cent lower in December than in June, although still 8.5 per cent above December, 1947. The Canadian wholesale price index reached 159.7 for November, the highest level since August, 1920. This appeared to mark a turning point. The wholesale price index for Australia advanced seven per cent between June and December.

In France, the rate of increase in wholesale price levels was reduced to less than half that of the first six months of 1948. The rise of 16.6 per cent, while still high, compared

with 38.9 per cent for the preceding six months, and 34.6 per cent for the second half of 1947. The index of wholesale prices in Italy was 10.8 per cent higher in December than in June. This was a reversal of the trend in the first half of the year, when a decline of 6.9 per cent occurred. Efforts of the Chinese Nationalist Government to stabilize the Yuan haven't halted sharp price increases, and the index of wholesale prices for Shanghai, on the base August 19, 1948=100, stood at 3,583.7 for December.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR:** If it proves nothing else the Canadian International Trade Fair will prove that people of different towns, cities and villages from all over the globe have a common denominator--trade. From May 30 to June 10, the Trade Fair will welcome business people from Chepstow and Stoke-on-Trent in England; Motherwell, Glasgow and Alloa, Scotland; Naples, Florence and Milan, Italy; Detroit, Nashville and Los Angeles; Honolulu; Bangkok; Shanghai and Hong Kong; Bombay; New Delhi and Singapore; Niederbronn, Paris and Lyons; Newmarket, Montreal, Vancouver and Niagara-on-the-Lake; Stockholm; Caracas and Curacao; Sao Paulo, to name only a very few, the Trade Fair authorities report.

At this meeting place of the nations there will be no discussions on war, aggression, or defence. Ordinary people with goods to sell will display them before people who need them, and the man in the street of all the cities, towns and villages they call home, will benefit from their peaceful activities.

**NEW DWELLING UNITS:** The number of dwelling units completed in Canada in the first three months of 1949 is estimated at 17,800, up 6,300 or 54 per cent over the same period of 1948. The increase is attributed to the unusually higher carryover at the beginning of 1949. In spite of the greatly increased completions, the amount of work in progress remains high, according to the monthly report by the Bureau of Statistics. First-quarter starts rose 26 per cent or from 6,700 a year ago to 8,400, and the number under construction was reduced from only 56,500 at January 1 to 46,900 at March 1, the latter figure comparing with 37,500 at the end of March last year.

In March, 6,400 units were completed compared with 4,100 in the corresponding month last year, while starts were made on 3,600 units compared with 3,100 a year earlier. The average length of time required to build the dwelling units completed in March was 7.9 months, the highest for any month since the beginning of 1948. In the fall of 1948, the emphasis was upon getting dwelling units started and closed in, the interior finishing being postponed until the winter months.

Number of dwelling units completed in the

first quarter of 1949 by regions, with figures for the same period of 1948 in brackets, were: Maritime Provinces, 1,160 (496); Quebec, 4,604 (2,887); Ontario, 6,396 (4,098); Prairie Provinces, 2,897 (1,899); British Columbia, 2,769 (2,189). March completions: Maritimes, 477 (158); Quebec, 1,854 (1,525); Ontario, 2,066 (1,113); Prairie Provinces, 1,248 (613); British Columbia, 731 (646).

**COTC SUMMER TRAINING:** This summer approximately 2050 university COTC cadets plus members of the command contingents and cadets from Royal Roads and the Royal Military College will receive up to 16 weeks training at various corps schools and military installations across Canada.

The university officer cadets, representing 24 Canadian universities, began reporting for the practical phases of their training the first week in May and groups will be joining their corps at intervals until the end of June. Candidates for commissions in the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps began reporting for the first and second practical phases of their training at Camp Borden, Ont., on May 7, while the first group of third phase cadets joined the Lord Strathcona's Horse at Camp Wainwright on the same date. Cadets taking the third practical phase of their training with the Royal Canadian Dragoons began arriving at Petawawa Camp on May 14.

In the Royal Canadian Artillery, COTC training is being carried on at the Royal Canadian School of Artillery at Shilo, Man., Picton, Ont. and Esquimalt, B.C. These cadets also began arriving the first week in May. COTC members of other corps will receive their practical training at the Royal Canadian School of Signals, Kingston, Ont., the Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering at Chilliwack, B.C., the Royal Canadian School of Infantry at Camp Borden, Calgary and Valcartier, the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps School at Montreal, and the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers School at Barriefield, Ont. A number of cadets training for commissions in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps and the Royal Canadian Dental Corps will serve in various military hospitals and dental clinics in addition to those attending the RCAMC and RCDC schools.

**MAIL SERVICE TO CHINA:** Effective immediately mail service to China is temporarily suspended, the Post Office Department announced on May 21, with the exceptions mentioned below.

Regular mail, that is all mail except parcel post, may still be sent to the provinces of Fukien, Kwangtung, and Kwangsi only.

Mail for China will therefore be accepted only for the destinations indicated.