

over the two-year period of better than 3 per cent. It looks as if the Canadian economy, after a period of eight years of uninterrupted post-war expansion, paused in 1954, only to resume its upward trend with renewed vigour, resulting in two years' economic growth being compressed into one year.

Another outstanding feature of Canada's economic achievements of last year was that our expansion proceeded on a broad front covering almost every sector of the economy as well as all regions of our country.

The volume of industrial output was about 9 per cent higher in 1955 than in 1954, exceeding the previous record of 1953 by about 7 per cent. The volume of mining production was 15 per cent above the level of 1954, and considerably higher than 1953, by almost 30 per cent. Manufacturing output in volume terms showed a gain of 7 per cent over 1954 and of 2 per cent over the previous high mark of 1953. The volume output of Canada's electric power and manufactured gas industries rose by 8 per cent over 1954 and 14 per cent over 1953. Many of our key industries chalked up new records. Our steel production rose by over 40 per cent in the year just passed. Notable records were also achieved in other industries, including nickel, iron ore, zinc, asbestos, cement and passenger cars. Even in the newsprint industry, which has been working at capacity in the post-war period, another record was set in 1955, with an increase in output of 4 per cent over 1954. Business also picked up in some industries that had had difficulties the year before, such as the textile industry and the farm implements industry. And, of course, your own industry, the hardware business, kept in step with the nation by chalking up new records. I shall have something to say about this a little later.

That economic expansion was well distributed regionally across Canada is illustrated by the expansion in output in our manufacturing industries. The gross value of production of our manufacturing industries reached a total of \$18.7 billion in 1955, up by 6½ per cent over the year previous. Here are the comparable percentage increases for the major regions of Canada: Atlantic Region, up 4 per cent; Quebec, up 6 per cent; Ontario, up 6 per cent; Prairie Region, up 8 per cent, and British Columbia, up 7 per cent. Employment in all major regions in Canada rose and so did the incomes Canadians were earning. This in turn has made it possible for Canadians to spend more, and merchants across Canada were doing a landslide business. Our retail trade sales reached a record of \$12.7 billion, recording an increase of 6 per cent over 1954. The percentage increases for the major regions were as follows: Atlantic Region, up 6½ per cent; Quebec, up 5 per cent; Ontario, up 7 per cent; Prairie Region, up about 3 per cent, and British Columbia, up 10 per cent.