

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1950

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE, Wellington.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report on the Royal New Zealand Air Force for the year ended 31st March, 1950.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

During the past year progress has been made in the administrative organization and the operational efficiency of the R.N.Z.A.F., and both the flying and technical training programmes have been expanded. Much remains to be accomplished, however, before the operational control organization is fit for war in this theatre, and before any units of the Regular Air Force reach the minimum strength and operational efficiency necessary for service overseas.

The strength of the Air Force at 31st March, 1950, was 416 officers and 3,079 other ranks, which is 446 higher than last year. Recruiting has improved since last year, but it is still unsatisfactory, and the wastage rate of skilled personnel remains high. The cost of technical training is such that the provision of additional married quarters at stations would represent a real economy.

It has, for these reasons, been difficult to maintain the flying training programme as well as other Service and quasi-Service commitments. Nevertheless, the flying training programme has been doubled and the total flying has increased by 25 per cent. The increased flying has only been possible by relying still more on private industry.

The maintenance difficulties are increased by the obsolescence of the existing equipment. The R.N.Z.A.F. is the only Commonwealth Air Force without at least some modern aircraft, and in view of the time involved in securing such aircraft under present conditions, this matter should receive early attention.

Progress has been made in the organization and training of the Territorial Air Force and the Active Reserve. It is hoped the introduction of the Military Training Act will overcome the shortage of ground trades in the Territorial Air Force.

### 2. OPERATIONS—REGULAR AIR FORCE

#### OVERSEAS

Since September, 1949, a detached flight comprising three aircraft and four crews of No. 41 Transport Squadron has been attached to Far East Air Command, R.A.F. This flight is based at Singapore. In order to provide replacement crews, aircraft spares, and mail, one courier flight from New Zealand to Singapore and return is carried out each month. In January, 1950, a detachment of two Catalinas and four crews of No. 5 Squadron, Fiji, was exchanged with two Sunderlands of No. 88 R.A.F. Squadron, Hong Kong. Two transport crews continue to represent the R.N.Z.A.F. on No. 24 Commonwealth Transport Squadron, R.A.F.

#### CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER SERVICES

No. 75 Squadron has carried out a series of exercises with the Army and Navy. During the recent visit of units of the Royal Australian Navy, combined operation exercises provided valuable experience for Mosquito crews of this squadron.

#### SQUADRON ACTIVITIES

No. 5 Squadron, Fiji, equipped with six Catalina aircraft, has continued to be employed on the training of replacement aircrew and on search and rescue missions, and has carried out thirteen "mercy" flights at the request of the High Commissioner