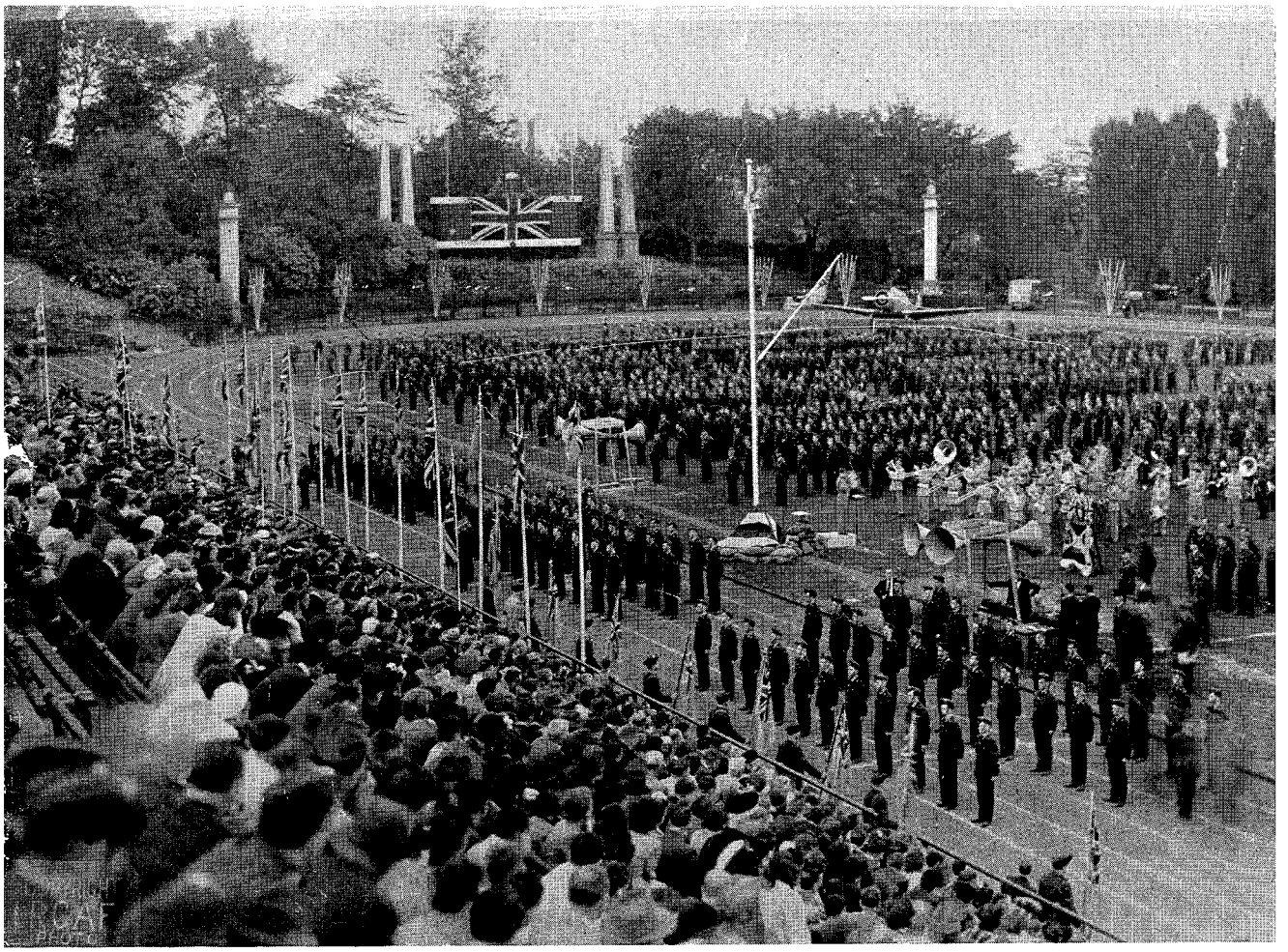

Mass inspection of three thousand Air Cadets at Montreal's Molson Stadium. In the foreground are three crack precision squads.

THE AIR CADET LEAGUE OF CANADA

(Reprinted from the CANADIAN GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL October, 1944.)

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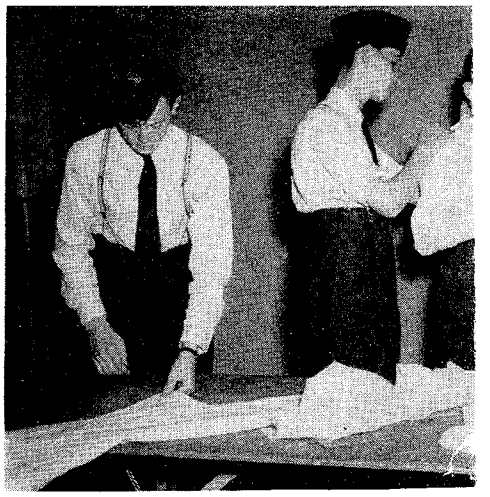
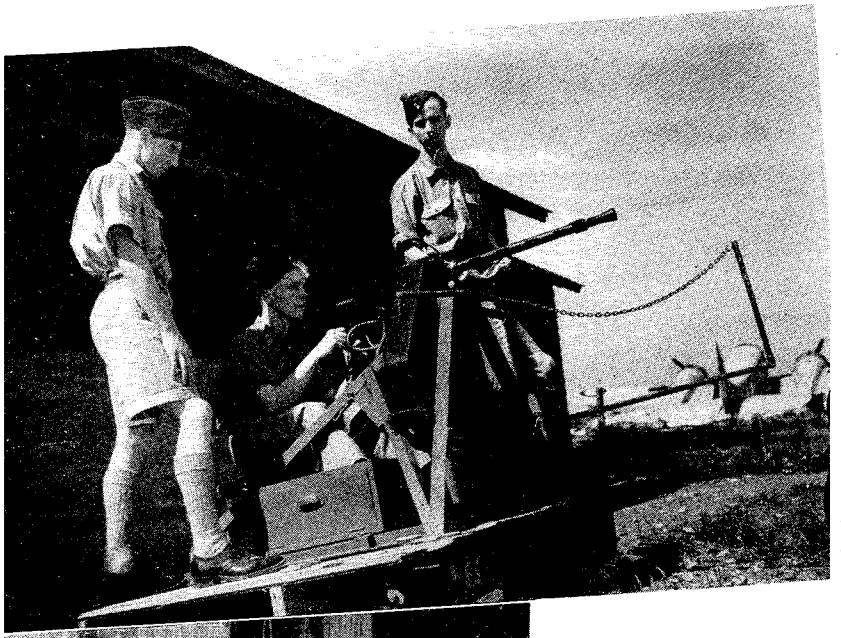


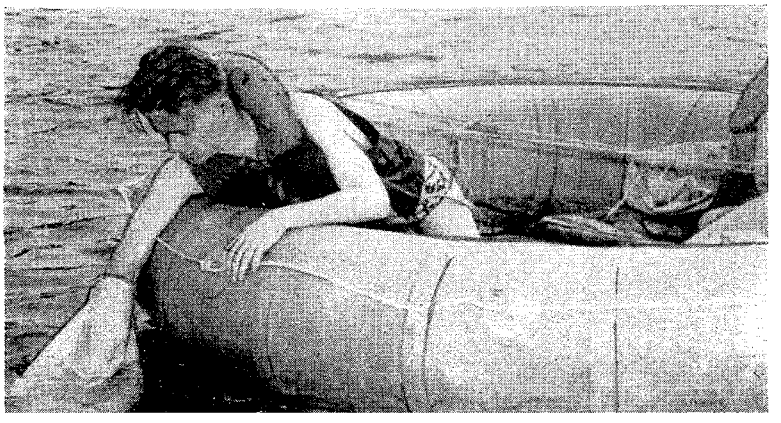


Top left:—Signalling is an important phase of training.

Centre left:—Gunnery practice on an air station

Lower left:—The importance of parachute packing is emphasized.

Top:—Essentials of first aid are taught.



THE AIR CADET LEAGUE OF CANADA

by ARTHUR L. MELLING

Introduction and Purposes

THE Air Cadet League of Canada was formed in the dark days of 1941, to serve two main purposes. The first of these was a war purpose: so that there might be available to the Royal Canadian Air Force a pre-trained junior volunteer reserve which would act as an aircrew feeder

As this is being written, the armies of the United Nations are pressing close to Germany and Japan. Our air forces are achieving exceptional results at a low rate of loss, and as a consequence the aircrew requirements of the R.C.A.F are at a minimum.

Because of this it would seem that the first purpose—the war purpose—of the League has largely been served, and that the time has come to re-emphasize its second purpose to make available a basic training in aviation that will better fit Canadian youths for peacetime careers, either in the Service, in civil aviation, or in other walks of life.

The League is going ahead in this purpose, and planning its conversion to a peacetime agency with the same vigour that it tackled the military purpose in the early days of the war

Origin and Authority

It would be difficult to say exactly where the idea of Air Cadet training started. Actually, I think it originated in many minds and many places almost simultaneously There were individual Air Cadet groups in Canada before the League started; in Vancouver, Montreal, Windsor, Penhold, Winnipeg and undoubtedly elsewhere.

The Air Cadet League, which became the national organization, was first considered in 1940 by a group of civilians who had served with the Air Force in the last war, and who were anxious to serve again in this.

It would not be possible to give due credit to all those who contributed in the early days, but I know that we are all particularly proud of the splendid support given by so many Air Force veterans; among them four distinguished aces of the last war· Air Marshal W A. Bishop, V C., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., D.F C., A. W Carter, M.B.E., D.S.C., of Vancouver; Donald R. MacLaren, D.S.O., M.C., D.F C.. of Winnipeg, and George B. Foster, K.C., D.F C., of Montreal.

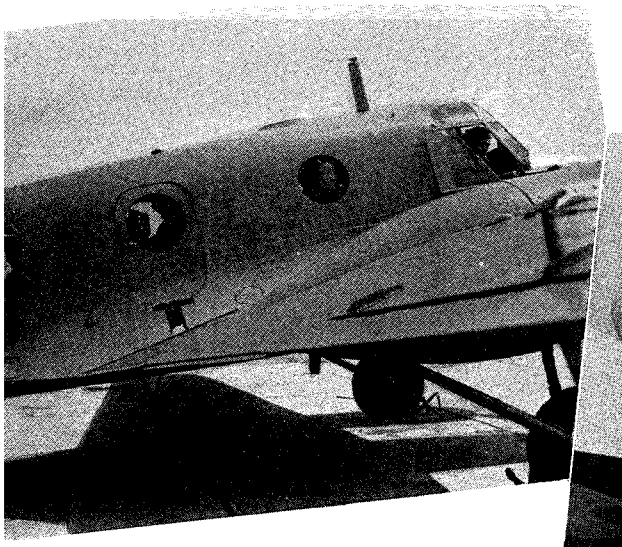
The original sponsors presented the idea to Air Minister Power who was sympathetic to the need for Air Cadet training. At subsequent meetings between the civilians and high-ranking officials of the Department of National Defence for Air, the question of form was studied, and it was decided that all youths enrolled would have to be under the direct ægis of civilian bodies, nationally and regionally, who could command the respect and confidence of Canadian parents.

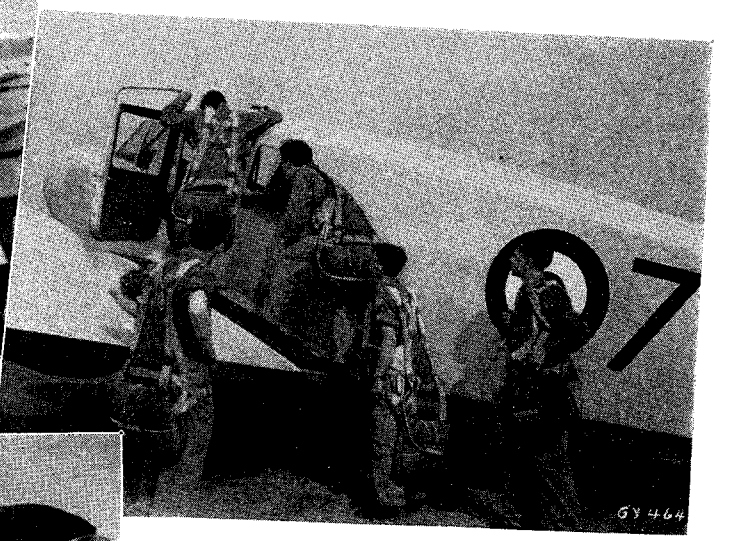
Once the Air Minister was satisfied that the interested civilians met this condition, he offered the full support of his department. In November, 1940, authority for the Air Cadet League to organize and administer Air Cadets was granted through an Order-in-Council.

Training

The training given to Air Cadets is one of the most complete and productive of its kind ever offered to youth.

The moment an Air Cadet lives for! Here he is inside an Anson, about to take off for a familiarization "flip".

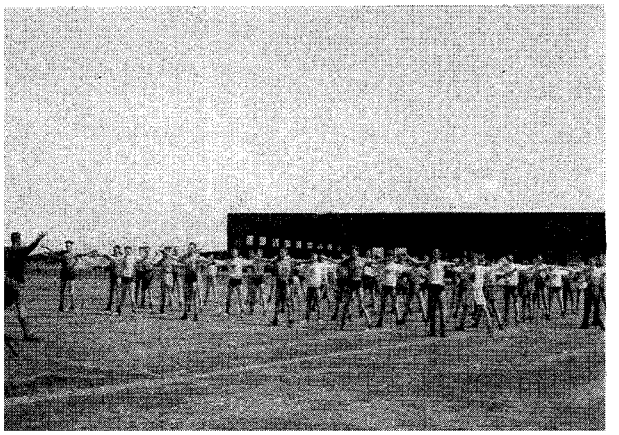


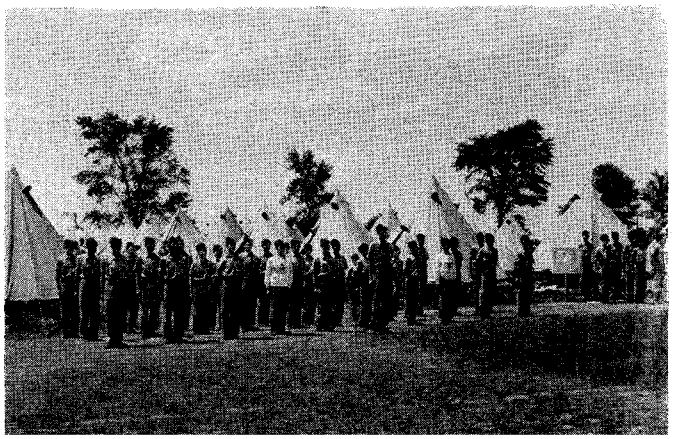


Above:—Air Cadets get familiarization flights in Service aircraft of half an hour's duration.

Left:—An airman trainee helps a cadet on with his helmet.

Below:—Physical training and drill are stressed both at summer camps and on squadron parade grounds. These are camp scenes.





The present syllabus provides for 247 hours of study as follows. aircraft recognition, 28; airmanship, 28; anti-gas, 6; armament, 8; first aid, 12; hygiene and sanitation, 5; knots and splices, 6; meteorology, 12; navigation, 50, mathematics, 20; progress of war study, 10; service familiarization, 14; signals, 48, drill and physical training, flexible.

Training is generally given two nights a week. In some school squadrons classes are incorporated into the school day The cadet year is from September to June inclusive, and ten days at summer camp.

When the Air Force assumed responsibility for training in 1942, its officers prepared a syllabus which was virtually the same as that used in the Initial Training School course of the R.C.A.F It was thought then that, in part-time training over the course of two years, cadets would be able to absorb this knowledge, and that they would be able to skip this phase of R.C.A.F training on entry into the Service. The idea, however, turned out to be rather ambitious, and the syllabus was modified. It was found that training had to be flexible and take into consideration varying local conditions. Often, in the smaller towns, it proved difficult to obtain competent instructors in all the required subjects· for instance, navigation and airmanship. And the educational background of cadets differed widely, particularly in the non-school squadrons. For these reasons the current syllabus has been arranged to give the squadron officers some option in choosing the subjects in which most efficient instruction can be given, and which are in accordance with the abilities and interests of the cadets enrolled. Drill and physical fitness are stressed as the nucleus of the training programme.

Training equipment issued to squadrons by the R.C.A.F includes Cooey rifles for drill and range shooting, navigation apparatus, signalling buzzers, keys and loudspeakers, respirators and gas detectors, projectors and lantern slides for aircraft recognition, instructional films, air publications and manuals. And in each Air Force Command there are three moving picture projectors that go out on loan to squadrons for the showing of special films of interest to cadets.

Summer camps were inaugurated in 1942, and in that summer 26 camps were held at Air Force stations and attended by 8,000 cadets. This year approximately 15,000 cadets attended camps from coast to coast. The camp programmes are prepared weeks in advance, and so planned that the cadets' days are very full. On the stations they live in airmen's barracks, eat in the regular airmen's mess, and are under the supervision of their own officers and a special group of R.C.A.F. non-commissioned officers. Customarily, one of the staff officers of the station acts as a liaison officer between station commanding officer and cadets.

On the stations cadets have lectures, drill periods and talks on special phases of Service life by R.C.A.F officers. They spend considerable time on familiarization visits and tours. Generally they spend afternoons in the hangars, where they help the airmen with such work as may be within their capabilities. They clean and polish aircraft, move planes about, run errands for mechanics, and perform such "fatigues" as sweeping the hangars—which is never a chore as it keeps them close to their beloved machines.

This year camps were an outstanding success due to the inclusion of familiarization flights. At all camps cadets were given flights in Service aircraft Ansons, Cansos, Bolingbrokes and Dakotas among them. This is really a remarkable situation, compared to that of a few years ago when boys of the same age and spirit were left standing outside the airport fences, looking in.

Social life on the station is equally pleasant for cadets, as they are permitted the run of the dry canteen and often participate in the airmen's functions. Other features include sports days and special parades with a ceremonial review at the end of the camp by the commanding officer of the station.

Camps are held also for Air Cadet officers and instructors, of two weeks' duration, and these have proved of inestimable value. Not only do they enable instructors and officers to qualify in their

subjects, but they make possible very enlightening discussions of mutual problems and generally help to create a unity of spirit.

This past season a particularly exciting experiment has been tried in the Eastern Air Command, in the form of a special cadet N.C.O summer camp. Every squadron in the Maritimes sent two or more of its best young men to this camp where they underwent rigorous special training, designed to fit them for non-commissioned officer duties, and especially to enable them to act as leaders in physical training and target shooting programmes.

Another interesting phase of Air Cadet training is that given to non-school squadrons, where the syllabus is often augmented by such essentials as mathematics, and the boys are enabled to work up to the standard set by the R.C.A.F for aircrew recruits.

As a supplementary training aid the League publishes a Canadian *Air Cadet* magazine. This carries inspirational articles on famous fliers, articles on training subjects, and information on techniques developed by different squadrons to heighten interest.

Character of the Movement

In a factual report of this nature it is difficult to convey the character and scope of the Air Cadet movement: of the 379 squadrons spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the American border to the mining towns of Northern Ontario and the farmlands of the Peace River District. To understand this you have to travel across the country and meet the cadets and the officers; the farm lads and fisher lads, the sons of bankers and lawyers and railwaymen; the mechanics and teachers and station masters and dentists, and all the others who stand on equal footing in this democratic enterprise. You have to watch the cadets' eager faces at an ensign presentation; their solemn proud look at a public induction into the R.C.A.F., when they take the oath and march away with an Air Force escort, their controlled excitement as they form part of a square with the Air Force in that signal event—a Wings Parade. You have to watch a crack Air Cadet precision squad drilling on exhibition in Rockefeller Centre, New York, and another squad drilling in a Canadian village so remote that the inspecting officer has to fly in and land on the nearest lake. You have to go to a camp and watch the cadets ("gremlins" to the airmen) cluster around an aircraft just in off a coastal patrol, and sit with them in the mess and hear them discuss their "flips", the Spit IX, and Wing Commander McNair's latest exploit.

You have to visit the towns and cities as I did and see for yourself how community initiative can make every squadron different and exciting. In one prairie region several widely spread flights of one squadron have developed a transport system to get the boys to parades,—involving 65 miles of travel each parade night. In an Ontario town a squadron has built a unique and excellent headquarters from an old garage, with money and tools donated by local manufacturers. In another town cadets have built a glider under the supervision of one of their officers, and in still another place a squadron has a commando course for physical training.

Some of the larger squadrons have their own complete buildings, with beautifully outfitted classrooms and N.C.O 's rooms, reading rooms and special officers' quarters, and spacious parade grounds.

Twenty squadrons have full brass bands, and ninety have trumpet or drum bands.

In many towns, the Air Cadet squadrons have become local institutions, marching in Victory Loan parades and other ceremonies. They have their own church parades from time to time, take part in salvage drives and other community efforts, have their own newspaper columns and periodic radio programmes.

Results

The results of Air Cadet training have been very gratifying to all who have been connected with it. In the first place the cadets have succeeded well in their studies. Out of the thousands of Air Cadet examinations taken, there was an overall passing list of 80 to 85 per cent. And statistics have shown that Air Cadets who have enlisted as aircrew have scored above average marks in ground subjects at Initial Training School.

During the recent months when we have been able to keep accurate records

over 3,000 cadets have gone into the R.C.A.F., and, according to their instructors, have clearly revealed the benefits of their early training.

There have been other results, too, equally worthwhile. Those of us who have watched squadrons grow from scratch have seen unruly boys come to respect discipline, listless boys straighten up and smarten up, lonely boys find companionship, and many thousands of good average Canadian boys find a new outlet for the best that is in them, and find pride in the teamwork of the squadron.

That the results have been satisfactory from the standpoint of the Department of National Defence for Air has been attested to by the Minister, Hon. Charles Gavan Power, M.C. In his address to the Air Cadet League directors in February, 1944, Air Minister Power said.

"Thanks to you we have been able to obtain a large number of recruits who were badly needed at that time.

"A large number have joined, proceeded with their training and are now on the sky battlefronts not only in Europe, but all over the world. If that were the only accomplishment, you will have done work deserving of gratitude and appreciation of the R.C.A.F and members of the administration of the R.C.A.F

" . my thanks means that of the Air Force and that of the Government for the magnificent work which you have undertaken and which you have carried out."

How It Functions

The Air Cadet League functions through a national board of directors, provincial committees, central and regional committees in certain large centres and sponsoring committees for each squadron.

The League has a board of 26 directors which meets at least once a year and from whose number are chosen a president, vice-presidents and an executive committee of six members which meets as occasion demands. The national board represents all provinces, and is composed of leading members of Canadian business and professional life.

The League maintains its headquarters in Ottawa; produces the Canadian *Air Cadet* magazine, issues national publicity and assists squadrons in their promotion activities.

Within the provinces the provincial committees have responsibility for furthering the objects of the League. They provide for their own provincial financing, promote new squadrons, assist and guide squadron committees, organize and correlate publicity and other activities of interest to the squadrons at large, and maintain close liaison with the Departments of Education.

The regional and central committees, who come under the authority of the provincial committees, perform much the same functions within certain large centres.

Squadron committees organize squadrons; are responsible for their general welfare, provide financing for equipment (other than training), uniforming and amenities, provide suitable quarters for training; and recommend officers for appointment subject to R.C.A.F. and League approval. These sponsoring committees, which may properly be called the backbone of the Air Cadet movement, include business and professional men, educators and other prominent members of the community. About half of the squadrons are sponsored by schools; the other half by service clubs, boards of trade and independent civilian committees.

Squadron Administration

Most cadet squadrons are of a very substantial size. Many of them run into three and four hundred cadets; but, in order not to penalize the smaller communities, provision has been made for the affiliation of squadrons with a minimum of 25 cadets.

The actual administration of those squadrons is carried out by their officers and instructors. Officers are commissioned in a component of the R.C.A.F., known as the Air Cadet Corps, and wear uniforms identical to regular Service personnel with shoulder badges which carry the letters A.C.C.

Officers of the Air Cadet Corps receive Service pay and allowances according to rank to a maximum of 55 days a year.

Cadet ages are from 15 to 18, but there

Air Cadet League Patron: His Excellency The Right Honourable The Earl of Athlone, K.G.,
Governor General of Canada

Honorary President: Air Marshal W. A. Bishop, V.C., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., D.F.C., LL.D.

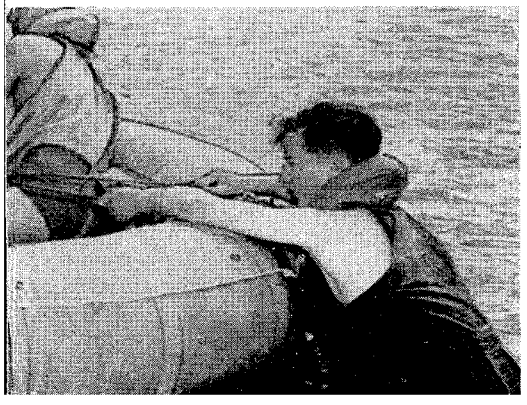
Above:—Aircraft recognition and range estimation are never-ending studies for future airmen.

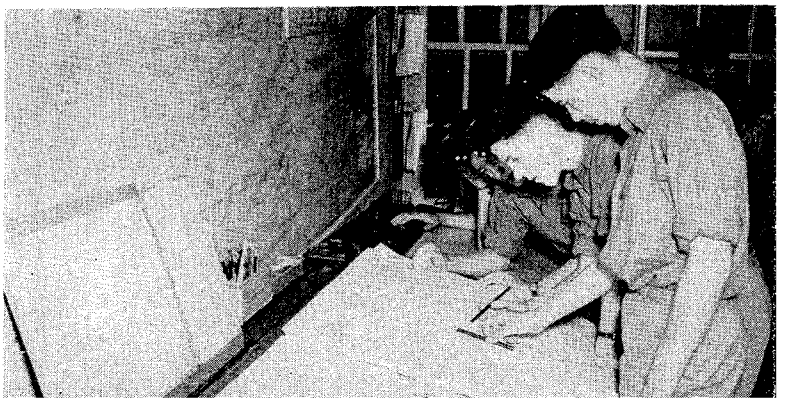
Below—Dinghy drill at a West Coast summer camp

Top right:—A WD sending; Air Cadets receiving.

Centre right:—Instruction from a Flying Officer in anti-gas techniques.

Below right:—Navigation is the most difficult syllabus subject—and one of the most essential.





is provision for a limited number of juniors, aged 12 to 15, in school squadrons when desired. Cadets wear a uniform similar to that of R.C.A.F airmen, with a distinctive badge on the collar, and the squadron name and number on the shoulder

Cadet ranks correspond to those of the R.C.A.F from warrant officer down to Air Cadet, Second Class.

Air Cadet officers conduct the training of the squadron according to orders issued from their respective Training Commands of the R.C.A.F They prepare cadets for examinations set by the Air Force and for annual inspection by an R.C.A.F officer, —the Air Officer commanding the Command, or his representative.

Squadrons in good standing are presented with the Air Cadet ensign not sooner than three months after affiliation. The ensign is almost the same as that of the Air Force, a Union Jack on a field of air force blue, with an albatross surmounted by a maple leaf, in gold, in a circle of royal blue.

The presentation is generally made by a ranking officer of the Air Force or the League, and the ceremony itself is most impressive.

How It Developed

The League has come a long way since its inception in 1941 In the early part of 1941 a national board of key men was chosen and it met for the first time in June of that year The next few months were extremely hectic; working on rules and regulations, drawing up training manuals and, at the same time, organizing in the provinces

The National Board of Directors appointed provincial chairmen, who in turn set up their own committees, and these gentlemen travelled widely, talking to service clubs, boards of trade, civic officials, school boards and other public-minded citizens, recruiting local sponsorship for squadrons.

The organizing of squadrons proceeded through the fall months of 1941 and by the end of December there were 79 squadrons affiliated across the country By May, 1942, there were 135 squadrons and 10,000 cadets, and in August, 1943, 315 squadrons with 23,000 cadets.

Now, in September of 1944, we are at a new peak of strength with 379 squadrons and approximately 31,000 cadets. On strength as well are 1,728 officers; 387 chaplains and medical officers; 650 civilian instructors, and 1,920 civilians active on unit and regional committees. There are also many thousands of civilians who, independently, and as members of service clubs and other organizations, have provided financial support and taken a keen interest in Air Cadets without actually serving on committees.

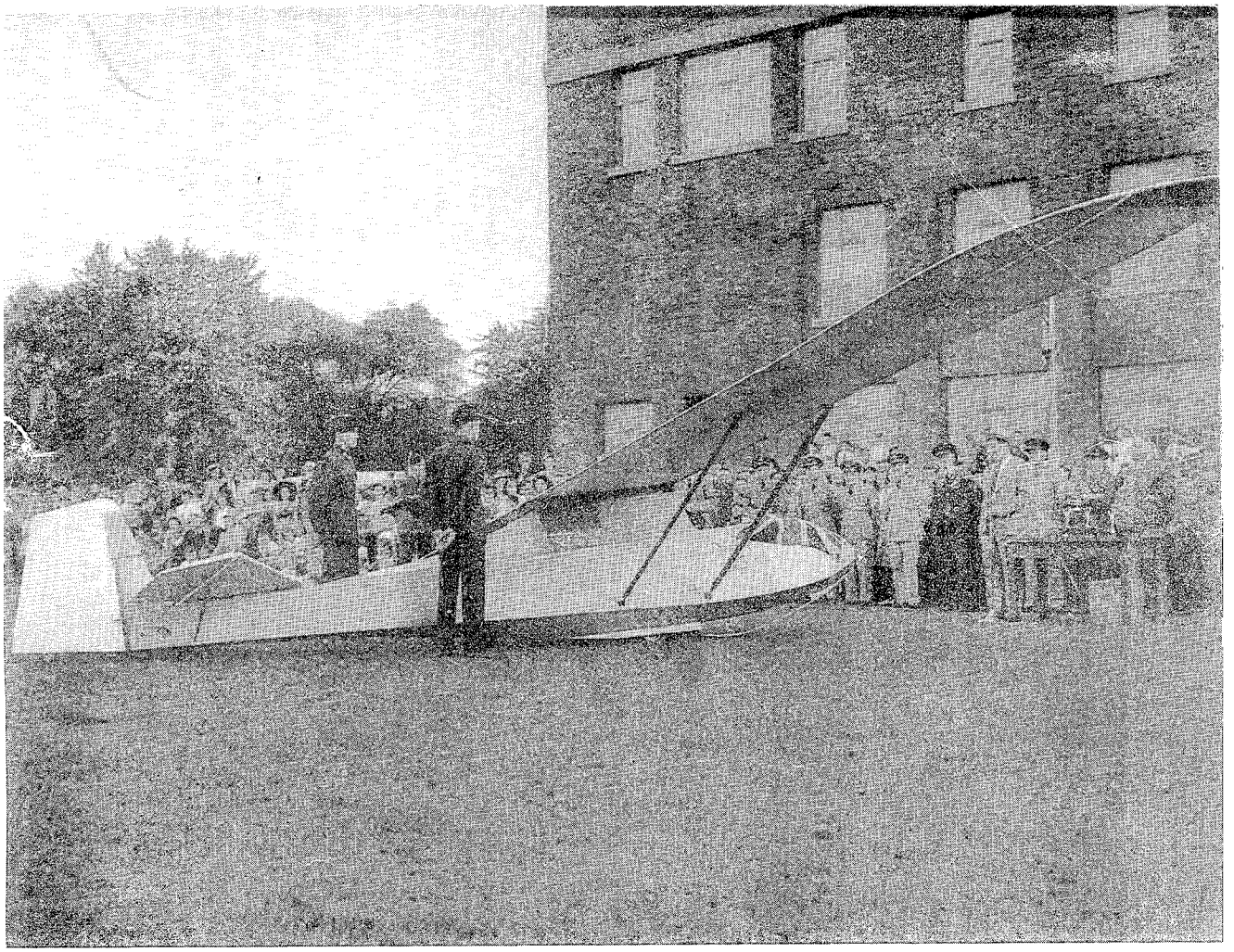
Coincident with our growth, Air Force participation has grown in degree. Month by month the R.C.A.F has augmented the training and other facilities supplied to squadrons. In the summer of 1942, it commenced summer camps for cadets on air stations, with special camps for officers and instructors. In April, 1943, it granted King's Commissions, and, finally, in the summer of 1944, it made possible the high point of all our training—familiarization flights for cadets!

From the beginning, the League and the Air Force have worked as a very close partnership, with parallel numbers in each organization at every level.

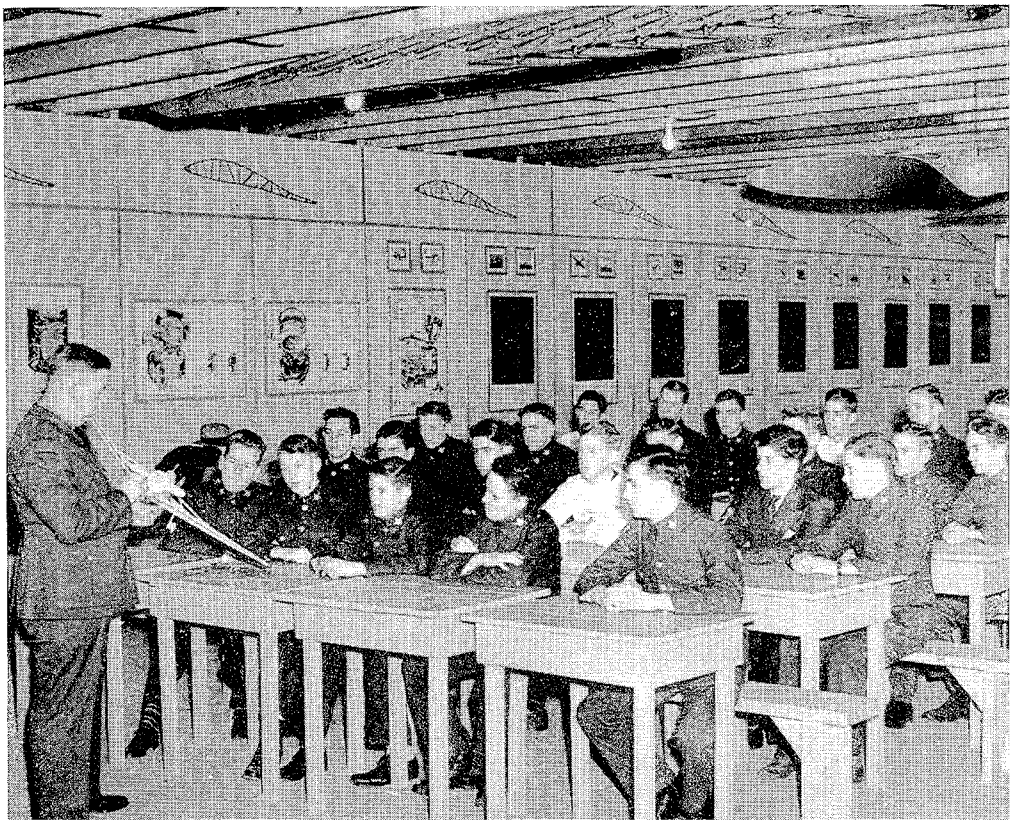
The Future

In recent days meetings have been held all across the country by squadron committees, provincial committees and national executives on the subject of post-war development, and opinion is unanimous that we must carry into the peace the spirit in which the League was conceived and fostered, though our form of organization and the details of training may have to be considerably adjusted. In this regard I refer again to Air Minister Power's speech to the directors

" the work you are doing now is laying a foundation for something which will be extremely important in the post-war years in Canada, and every encouragement should be given to our people young and old, and to those of you who have given their heart and soul to this work, to look forward to a great period of aerial activity in Canada after the war "



Above:—Local support is strong for Air Cadet squadrons. A manufacturing concern helped an Ontario squadron build this glider



Right:—Manufacturers also helped build and equip these training headquarters.

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