

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Meteorological.—An efficient Meteorological Service and a Flying Control Service are vital to both the Air Force and civil aviation. It has been decided, in order to ensure unity of control, greater safety, and economy, that only one Meteorological Service and one Flying Control Service shall be maintained.

These must necessarily be organized on a civil basis, although there are certain Air Force requirements for which provision is to be made. The Air Force Meteorological Branch reverted to a civil status in October, 1946, and remained with the Air Department. The report of the Director of Meteorological Services is included in another section of this report.

Flying Control.—The Flying Control Service is due to be established shortly on a civil basis under the Director of Civil Aviation. It is at present providing control service from four control centres and nineteen control towers, with a total staff of 54 officers and 60 airmen in New Zealand and the South Pacific. In addition, at several of the smaller aerodromes aeradio staffs supply control facilities on behalf of the organization. Improved communications made available during the year have enabled the Flying Control Service to keep pace with the increased civil air traffic.

Air-sea Rescue.—The Air Force maintains an air-sea rescue organization consisting of 2 Catalina flying-boats and 2 Hudson landplanes equipped with airborne lifeboats for search and rescue of aircraft and vessels. This is an obligation assumed under the International Civil Aviation Convention and is one which can more economically be fulfilled by the Air Force. It is co-ordinated by the Flying Control Service, which in the case of missing vessels works with the Marine Department and local port authorities. During the year it has taken part in a total of forty-five search and/or rescue operations.

PERSONNEL

The release of all temporary personnel who wished to be demobilized was completed by 15th July, 1946, within the prescribed period of one year from the cessation of hostilities. The unavoidable loss of highly trained war personnel was accentuated in the Air Force by the lack of long-service Regular personnel. This was due to the fact that the Royal New Zealand Air Force had virtually only been established immediately prior to the war. The resulting shortage of key personnel has forced a considerable reduction in flying operations and delayed the resumption of flying training. Comparatively little relief has been obtained from the recruiting programme, as few skilled tradesmen have returned to the Service.

Since March, 1946, enlistments into the Interim Air Force for varying terms of engagement up to 31st March, 1948, have totalled 2,073. These airmen were primarily required for administrative and equipment duties arising out of war activities. Their terms of service did not permit extensive courses, particularly in technical training, to be conducted. Applications were called in November, 1946, from serving personnel for engagements in the Regular Air Force, and 1,337 applications were received. The engagement of personnel (officers and aircrew) to man the General Duties Branch has been satisfactory and some 230 appointments have been made. The manning position in the Air Force at the end of March, 1947, was as follows:—

	Officers.	Airmen.	Total.
Permanent service	61	8	69
Short service (five to eight years)	42	227	269
Interim service (expiring before March, 1948) ..	..	2,244	2,244
Temporary service (including 241 W.A.A.F.)	549	1,114	1,663
	652	3,593	4,245