

spares were considerably reduced following the disposal of the above aircraft. The Mosquito aircraft purchased from the R.A.F. last year will form suitable operational training equipment for squadrons during the interim period. The life of the other aircraft types (United States) remaining in the Service is strictly limited, and the commencement of a major rearming programme will be necessary about 1950. Already spares for all types are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain, as aircraft types held are now out of current production. Six new Auster airframes were purchased during the year, and when fitted with Gipsy Major Engines currently held in New Zealand these aircraft will be used for communications, fire patrol, and Army co-operation duties. Following a decision concerning the major reserve of bulk fuel to be held by the Service, thirty additional underground tanks were made available to the New Zealand Government Railways and the British Petroleum Co. of New Zealand, Ltd.

Acute man-power shortages in the equipment trades were again accentuated by the very considerable commitments involved in the segregation and disposal of surplus war equipment. The physical disposal of surplus tools, machinery, clothing, and metals proceeded, but generally the progress made has been insufficient to lessen the task when it is considered in proportion to the limited number of personnel available and the increasing importance of reconstituting the Air Force in accordance with the post-war plan. In short, the R.N.Z.A.F. is no longer able competently to handle in present detail the disposal of the remaining surplus and at the same time reconstitute its administrative activities in the equipment and accounting spheres which are fundamentally necessary to its successful re-establishment as a fighting Service. Discussions on this problem are being held with the War Assets Realization Board.

TECHNICAL SERVICES

Following the example set by the R.A.F., the technical services of the R.N.Z.A.F. were reorganized to provide for their closer integration, particularly in view of the increasing importance of technical and scientific developments in air defence. A Directorate of Technical Services was established at Air Department to embrace all aspects of aeronautical engineering, technical training, and the technical aspect of signals and armament.

Engineering commitments could not all be covered and had to be dealt with on a priority basis to ensure that the standard of aircraft maintenance was kept at a high level.

No. 1 Repair Depot is being prepared for the overhaul of Mosquito aircraft. This repair depot will cover the overhaul of operational-type aircraft, while all training-type aircraft will pass through No. 2 Repair Depot to be established at Wigram. Because of the shortage of trained technical personnel, some maintenance work in support of priority flying commitments was contracted to civilian aircraft engineering companies during the year. The policy of the Air Force, however, is to carry out all normal maintenance within the Service except in the case of major repairs and modifications, which are not normally done by the Air Force.

During the year the R.N.Z.A.F. was relieved of the responsibility of operating the communication channels and radio aids to air navigation which are required for the control of both civil and Service aircraft on travel flights within New Zealand. The Civil Aviation Branch of Air Department has assumed this responsibility. Essential communications in the R.N.Z.A.F. were maintained at a reduced level. Land-line channels and teleprinter services were taken over by the Post and Telegraph Department and are now rented to the R.N.Z.A.F. This latter move has been in the interests of economy of operation and maintenance in peacetime.