

# THE AIRBORNE SERVICES

## Curtis to Retire

Unofficial reports from Ottawa say that Air Marshal W. A. Curtis, Chief of the Air Staff since 1947, will retire soon. Most likely choice of a successor is Air Vice-Marshal C. R. Slemon, at 48 ten years younger than A/M Curtis. A/V/M Slemon is one of the service's five originals, having joined the embryo Canadian Air Force on its formation in 1923.

## Leap Frog

Operation Leap Frog, the trans-Atlantic flight by the RCAF's 439 Fighter Squadron from Uplands, near Ottawa, to North Luffenham in the U.K., was completed on June 15. The Squadron took off from Uplands on May 30, but were delayed by weather at every stop on the way. The flight, which involved 20 F-86E Sabres, marked the first time Canadian turbojets had ever flown the Atlantic. Only member of the squadron to have flown the ocean in a jet before was the commanding officer, Squadron Leader Cal Bricker, who had done it in a Thunderjet while on loan to the USAF.

First stop for the Sabres was Bagotville, P.Q., a distance of 305 miles. From there they went to Goose Bay, 508 miles farther on, at which point the RCAF began to restrict information concerning the progress of the flight. Next stage was the 780 mile leg to Bluie West, in southern Greenland; from there 750 miles to Keflavik in Iceland, and then on to Kinloss, Scotland, 775 miles away and the final overwater leg. From Kinloss the Sabres completed their journey to North Luffenham, just 370 miles away.

Servicing at each point was carried on by the Squadron's own ground crew, who were flown ahead by Transport Command.

The entire movement was under the control of Air Transport Command, with Wing Commander C. H. Mussells directly in charge.

Pilots who took part in the historic flight were: S/L Cal Bricker, F/O George Fitzgerald, F/O Frank Raymond, F/O Ray Laroche, F/O Tom Wheeler, F/O Laurie Hamilton, F/O Tom Wilson, F/O Frank Fowler, F/O Ken Cheeseman, F/L Bill Bliss, F/O Charles Wilkinson, F/O Blake Smiley, F/O Len Pappass, F/O Ken Jennet,

F/L Harry Wenz, F/O Dick Wingate, F/O Herb Ruecker, F/O Al Seitz, F/O Alfred Everard, and F/O Sherman Hannah.

## RCAF to France

The three squadrons of No. 1 Fighter Wing, now based in the U.K., are expected to move to France this fall. According to Defence Minister Brooke Claxton, the French Government recently allotted an airfield for the RCAF's use in the region of Metz, south of the industrial Saar Valley (which is in northeast France).

Construction of additional facilities on the field is now being carried out



**CANADIAN COMBATANT:** One of the few Canadian airmen to see action in the Korean War is Flying Officer Jack D. Donald, who has been serving with the USAF's Fifth Air Force 4th Fighter Wing. F/O Donald flies an F-86 Sabre. An exchange agreement between the RCAF and the USAF provides that several Canadian fighter pilots are gaining combat experience in Korea at all times.

by the French, though it is understood that the cost of these will be borne by Canada. It is expected that at least three other airfields will be required when the RCAF Air Division is brought up to strength in about 1954. One of these will probably be in West Germany.

## Sound the Gong

Recognition of the magnificent job being performed by 426 Thunderbird Squadron on the Korean Airlift was contained in the Queen's Birthday Honours List released June 5 in Lon-

don. Fourteen officers and men of the transport unit received awards and citations for duty on the Airlift, in which 426 has been participating since July 27, 1950.

To Wing Commander C. H. Mussells, DSO, DFC, CD, commanding officer of 426 during the squadron's initial participation in the Airlift, went the OBE. Chief Technical Officer of the Squadron at the same time, W/C W. H. Lord, was awarded the MBE. Air Force Crosses went to W/C H. A. Morrison, DSO, DFC, for his work as 2 I/C of 426, to Squadron Leader J. D. Dickson, DFC, DFM, present 2 I/C, and to Flight Lieutenant D. M. Payne, DFC, a North Star pilot.

Receiving AFM's were Flight Sergeant A. A. Drackley, flight engineer; and Warrant Officer II A. L. Engelbert, CD, maintenance crew chief.

The Queen's Commendation for Valuable Services in the Air was bestowed on: F/L J. B. Miller, North Star pilot; F/L Abraham Finklestein, navigator; S/L R. E. D. Ratcliffe, DFC, navigation leader; S/L C. E. Endersbe, radio officer; F/L William Smith, radio officer; Corporal E. C. Grose, air traffic assistant; Sergeant F. S. M. Bowman, flight engineer.

## Station Penhold

The RCAF's new station at Penhold, Alberta, opened recently and is now providing administrative and operational facilities for No. 4 FTS. Formerly located at Calgary, 4 FTS had been scheduled to go to the new station at Moose Jaw, which is now apparently to be the location of No. 2 FTS, formerly at Gimli. An AFS is slated to take over No. 2's facilities at Gimli.

## 434 Squadron

The formation this month of a new Sabre fighter squadron, No. 434, has been announced by AFHQ. The new unit will be based at RCAF Station Uplands, taking over the facilities formerly used by 439 Squadron, which is now attached to No. 1 Fighter Wing in the U.K. It is expected that 434 will be fully equipped with aircraft by mid-August.

During World War II this unit operated overseas as a heavy bomber squadron with the RCAF's 6 Group.

Commanding officer will be Wing Commander J. D. Mitchner, DFC, a veteran fighter pilot who completed two tours of operations against the enemy during the war. He was awarded the