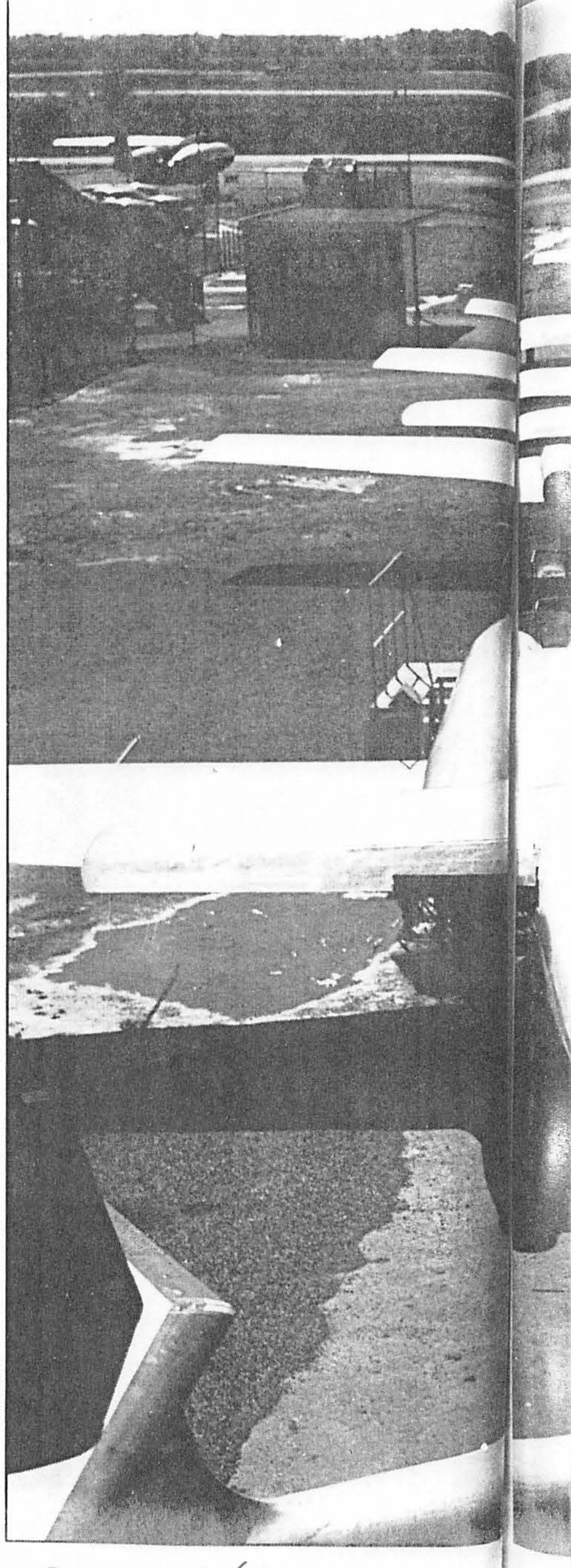
CANADA'S AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY 1956

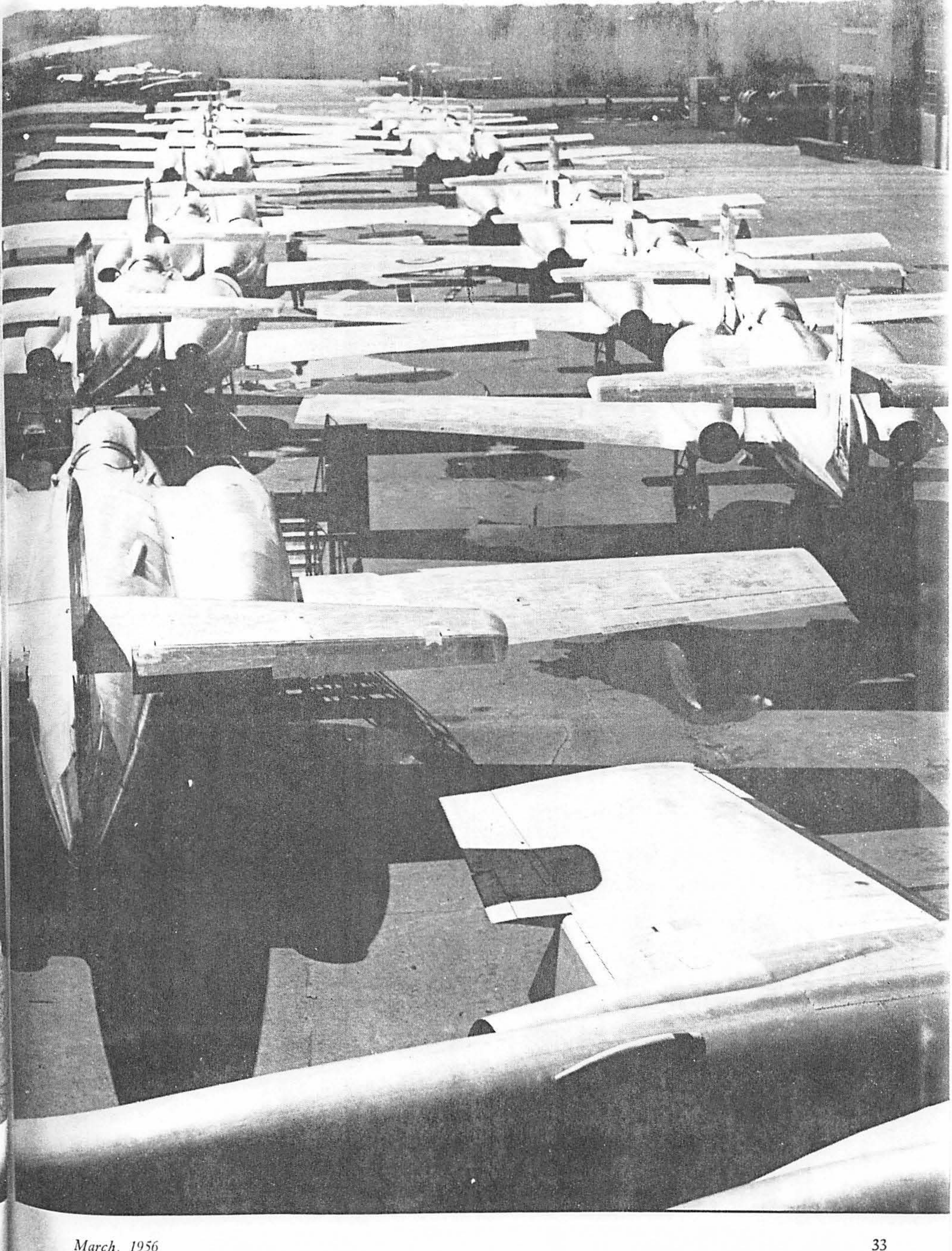


THE YEAR JUST past has been one of consolidation for Canada's Aircraft Industry. Paradoxically, it has also been one of frenetic activity. On the one hand, the production lines are quiet, mere dribbles of their former selves; on the other hand, the engineering departments of the handful of Canadian firms engaged in aircraft and aero engine design and development are making a maximum effort. While work in the production shops is spread just about as thin as it can go, in the engineering departments of companies like Avro Aircraft the nine-hour day has become the accepted minimium.

To the layman, this is possibly a situation that is hard to understand, though in actual fact the explanation is simple enough. This is a period of transition. The F-86 and the CF-100 can still keep up with some pretty fast company, but within an incredibly short time, they will be outmoded, outdated and the "e-s-c-e-n-t" in obsolescent will have become "e-t-e". Pilots will soon be referring to the "good old Sabre" in the same affectionate terms as they now speak of the Vampires and Meteors and what-have-you. If this is difficult to believe, then just reflect for a moment that not much more than a decade ago, the Spitfire was still considered a reasonably modern aircraft. In the short time since then one generation of jet aircraft has come and gone, and the second generation is preparing to bow out of the picture in favor of its supersonic successors, now well and truly on their way.

Thus, even while the CF-100's and the Sabres are still coming off the production lines, the Industry is preparing itself for a new round.

A heartening sign of the Industry's faith in its own future has been the manner in which the member companies are consolidating the gains that have been made since the Korean War by buying up, usually at original cost less depreciation, the plants and equipment that were originally built with Government funds. There is, for instance, no major aviation company in Canada which does not now own the plant it occupies. In the past year alone, Lucas-Rotax Ltd. and Sperry Gyroscope of Canada have purchased outright the land and buildings they occupy, while Canadian Pratt & Whitney bought up all the tools and equipment that were originally provided by the Government for the Wasp program. In addition, Lucas-Rotax has added to its plant by building a million-dollar laboratory, now nearly complete; at Canadair, (where a two-and-a-



Nearly 1,500 Sabres have now come out of this final assembly shop, part of the Montreal plant of Canadair Limited.

half million dollar engineering development plant building was recently opened) Avro Aircraft and Orenda Engines, expansion seems to be an elmost unending process. Many comparatively small firms which formerly operated out of leased space are following the lead of the big firms and constructing their own facilities. This is, perhaps, the most encouraging sign of all.

However, though it is widely accepted that busy times are ahead, there is little doubt that in the immediate ftutre business will continue to be slack. The Canadian Industry must still base its planning on Government spending, mainly on behalf of the RCAF, and to some degree for the Navy. The trend that began last year, when the 1955-56 Estimates dropped approximately $100,000,000 from those for 1954-55, is continued into the 1956-57 fiscal period. In the latest Estimates tabled by the Government, anticipated spending on new aircraft and engines for the RCAF has slipped to $197,024,000, a drop of nearly $100,000,000 from 1955-56, when over $293,500,000 was set aside for this purpose.

Black Boxes: On the other hand, the growing importance of the role of electronics in the modern RCAF is reflected in the amount allotted for Signal and Wireless Equipment . . . the general heading under which electronics comes. The estimate for this category has jumped by about a third, from $34,773,000 to well over $45,000,000.

The amount required for repairs and upkeep of equipment, is up only about $50,000 over 1955-56, when $119,292,000 was set aside. A year ago, it appeared likely that there would be much heavier spending in this line, but it seems to be remaining relatively stable. It now appears improbable that there will be much change from year to year in the repair and overhaul allotment, since the bulk of the RCAF's new equipment has now been in service long enough to establish the pattern of maintenance requirements.

Overall spending in other classifications affecting the Aircraft Industry is little changed, though there is some adjustment in the various categories. The amount allowed for Armament Equipment, for example, is only $567,000 in 1956-57, as compared to $1,500,000 a year earlier. However, the drop is more than taken up by the increase in estimated spending for Miscellaneous Technical Equipment—$11,221,000, up from $8,919,000, and Gas, Fuel Oil and Lubricants for aircraft and equipment —from $32,740,000 to $33,962,000. On the other side of the ledger, expected spending on Special Training Equipment will be down to $7,932,000 from $9,178,000.

Flying Navy: The Navy expects to increase its aviation spending during the coming year, $31,000,000 having been set aside, about $5,000,000 more than last year. It is interesting to note that in 1955-56, the Navy set aside for aircraft and engines over one third the amount it asked for new ships ($26,000,000 for a|c and engines vs. $73,000,000 for ships); this year the ratio was further reduced, with estimated spending on ships being only twice that for aircraft and engines ($31,000,000 for a|c and engines vs. $60,000,000 for ships).

The importance of Defence Research and Development continues to grow and nearly $50,000,000 is being reserv-

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INDUSTRY

(Continued from page 34)

ed for acquisition and construction of equipment for this activity, compared to less than $30,000,000 last year. A very large proportion of this will go towards the development of the new families of jet aircraft and engines. One item alone is for $1,750,000, covering the beginning of a new supersonic wind tunnel for the Defence Research Board.

Overall employment in the Industry is holding firm and in fact even seems to be beginning a slight upswing. Calculations based on individual company employment figures appearing in the recently published "Aviation Directory of Canada" indicate that there are approximately 42,900 persons directly engaged in the manufacture and repair and overhaul of aircraft, aero engines, and associated aeronautical ancillary equipment. A year ago, the estimated total was 41,200. Of this total, seven major companies—Avro Aircraft, Orenda Engines, Canadair, Canadian P & W, Canadian Car and Foundry, de Haviland Canada and Rolls-Royce of Canada—account for nearly 30,000.

So much for general comment on the state of Canada's Aircraft Industry. For details of how the individual companies and their products are faring, turn to page 36 *et seq*.