

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

One of a series of articles written specially for Weekly Newspapers by Hugh Tompkin, Editor of the Fergus News-Record

NOT EASY TO ENLIST IN ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

It is not easy to join the Royal Canadian Air Force.

That is not because men are not wanted; they are, and the need will become greater. It is not because one has to go far to find a Recruiting Centre; they are scattered all over Canada, and every province has at least one of them. Ontario has six—at North Bay, Windsor, London, Hamilton, Toronto and Ottawa. It is hard because the R.C.A.F. is particular about those it allows into its ranks. There is a high tradition to be maintained. For the air crew, at least, educational requirements are high. A pilot, for instance, must have junior matriculation, or better.

Alert, physically fit young men are needed of course. The age limit for pilots is 30 years; for air observers and wireless operators, two years older. According to the official literature, applicants are required to be of good character, possessing intelligence and personality, and to be observant, self-reliant and keen on flying. And this means just what it says.

At the Recruiting Centre

In order to find out just how a young man would join the R. C. A. F., I started at the beginning of the procedure. I went to the Recruiting Centre at 297 Bay Street, Toronto, choosing it because it is the largest and—the busiest in Ontario. The staff numbers 45.

The Recruiting Centre is in an old office building. That was obvious, not only because of the layout but because the names of brokerage firms and the like are still to be found on some of the doors. In the hallway, a man scrutinized me carefully. He said nothing but his look was penetrating. I wondered if I was suspected of spying or something of the kind but my guide, Flying Officer Nicol, steered me safely past. Later, I learned that the man in the hall is an expert in character study. Had I fortified myself with a few drinks, or beef otherwise unsuited to become a member of this great brotherhood, he would have found an excuse for steering me out the door.

The "expert in character study" is red-headed Sgt. "Cy" Tricker, who recently married Mary Edwards, formerly of Georgetown.—Ed.

Every applicant must have proof of age and education, at least two letters of recommendation and character, one of them from a recent or present employer, a marriage certificate, if applicable, birth certificates of children, if any, and discharge papers, if formerly in military service. I might have supplied them all, but had none with me. Most applicants go like that and are sent to the Parliament Buildings or wherever it is necessary to go to get the certificates. There is no charge for these, if applicant uses the forms given him at the Recruiting Centre.

Pilots are Most Popular

Nearly every applicant, who has the qualifications, wants to be a pilot. That's easy enough to understand for there's a certain glamour about the job. What boy hasn't dreamed of flying his plane through the skies? Who hasn't heard what Canadian pilots did during the last war? And how many really know much about all the other jobs the Air Force offers?

Many don't realize that conditions have changed greatly in the air since the last war. Then the pilot usually flew and fought alone; now co-operation is essential. Many planes carry crews of three or four or more. They require air observers, wireless operators and air runners.

For every plane flying in the air, a large crew is needed on the ground. The R.C.A.F. has some 65 trades in its ranks. Experienced men are much preferred, but inexperienced men of the right kind will be trained.

Many applicants try to bluff their way into the position, they desire. There's nothing new about that, of course, but it's almost impossible in the R.C.A.F. All applicants for trades must pass the "trade tests," even before the medical examinations. Two corporals start the questioning. If the man passes them, he goes to the Warrant Officer.

To save time, I slipped past the two corporals and went directly to Warrant Officer W. H. Day, familiarly known as Sgt. Major Day. In years past, I knew more than one Sergeant Major. It was never the most popular rank in the Army. But Sgt. Major Day was unlike any other of the rank that I had met. For one thing, he had a sense of humor. Equally important, he seemed to have an uncanny knowledge of the intricacies of all the trades in the Air Force.

I looked down the long list and pretended I wanted to be a motor mechanic. (I really wanted to be a pilot, but I was a bit too old.) I couldn't imagine myself being a diesel oiler or an interpreter, but everybody knows how to drive a car, so I would be a motor mechanic.

"Suppose you were out driving with your girl on the way to Niagara Falls and you were on a back road somewhere (What that man knows!), and your car stopped, what would you do first?" asked the Sergeant Major.

I said that I would look in the gas tank, but it appeared I had plenty of gas. After covering several possibilities, it seemed I had trouble in the timing of the ignition, and I was soon beyond my depth. The Warrant Officer knew far more about it than I did, so I decided to be a pilot after all.

That is typical of what every recruit goes through at first. I asked if some were not too nervous to answer. After all, a man joining the Air Force was taking an important and decisive step. Sgt. Major Day agreed, but he said that he soon put most recruits at ease and I believed him. If a few were still nervous, he sent them in to talk to the girls on the staff for a while. I didn't know whether to believe that or not. Anyway, I skipped that part of it.

place of birth, and so on. There is space enough to list the names of eight children, which should be ample. There are also some less obvious questions: Have you ever been convicted of an indictable offence? Are you in debt? (If so, state particulars—and there is plenty of space for the particulars.) Sports and hobbies? In addition, there is a question about flying experience in hours, solo dual or passenger. It is said that some of the applicants, particularly from the United States, have plenty of hours to their credit, but that doesn't always guarantee that they will be good pilots in the fighting services.

Definite and detailed instructions are given to each applicant when filling in the forms, yet 90 per cent are said to make one stupid mistake; they don't write in the name of their home town. They don't forget their street address, but most of them applying at that centre are from Toronto and don't think it necessary to say so.

The Medical Examinations

The medical examination is thorough, particular attention being paid to the eyes and hearing, as might be expected. After passing the usual eye tests, reading letters on the chart at a distance of 20 feet in a darkened tunnel, and so on, the doctor held up his finger two feet in front of my eyes and told me to watch it, as he slowly pushed it nearer my face. Gradually I grew more and more cross-eyed, which was quite proper. He asked me to try it with him. His eyes followed my finger to a certain point, then one suddenly snapped back. I was surprised, but it's fairly common. Those candidates haven't perfect muscular co-ordination, it seems, and can't judge distances accurately. They are the ones who might crash into another plane while landing.

Finally, there was the color blindness test. I looked at colored circles in a book, one to a page. Each one looked as though it was a mosaic pattern and in each I could trace with little difficulty usually, thought not so easily sometimes, a pair of figures—57, or 29, or a pattern. A man who was color blind would see an entirely different number, one which didn't show up until pointed out by Flying Officer Kinsey, who was giving me the tests. The system was devised by a Japanese professor who had made a study of color blindness. For those who are seriously color blind, there is a light test with red and green lights. It is said that five per cent of the recruits are color blind and so useless as members of an air crew.

Last stage in the recruiting process was carried on in a basement room where a full set of my finger prints was taken. The fingers were stuck on a sheet of glass coated with printer's ink or something of the kind, then pressed one by one in the proper places on a card, then the four fingers of the left hand together and the four of the right hand. My guide enjoyed this immensely, but there seemed to be a certain grimness to it as well.

The members of the R. C. A. F. carry copies of these and other identifications with them wherever they go.

After farewells to Flight Lieut. Lumsden, O.C. at the Recruiting Centre, and Flight Lieut. Muckell, I headed for the Manning Depot, the next stage in the life of the recruit in the R.C.A.F.

NEXT WEEK—The Manning Depot.

WORRIED FARMERS

The farmers were complaining, the weather was so dry; and then it started raining from out a leaky sky; the rain came down in billows mixed with snow and hail; and by the weeping willows the farmers raised a wail. The farmers are allowing the ground is now so wet they cannot do the plowing which is their one best bet. They're peeing and they're roaring they cannot sow their beans, they have to do their choring in boats and submarines. I've never known a granger who wasn't feeling sick, who was to grief a stranger, who didn't file a kick. The banker and the baker are smiling, cheerful men, and even the undertaker will gambol now and then. The butcher and the grocer will raise a glad hoolay, when Spring is drawing closer, and like the lambskin play. The sextor and the pastor find life is full of plums, and they'll forget disaster until disaster comes. The lawyer and the tinker, the justice of the peace pronounce this world a clinker, and life as slick as grease. But always and forever the farmer face is grim; the gods all make endeavor to put a crimp in him. A song of woe, untiring, is coming from his throat; the planets are conspiring to gather in his goat. To him there's nothing charming beneath the sullen sky—and if you've followed farming, you'll know the reason why.—Uncle Walt Mason—

Traffic was heavy on the highways over the holiday.

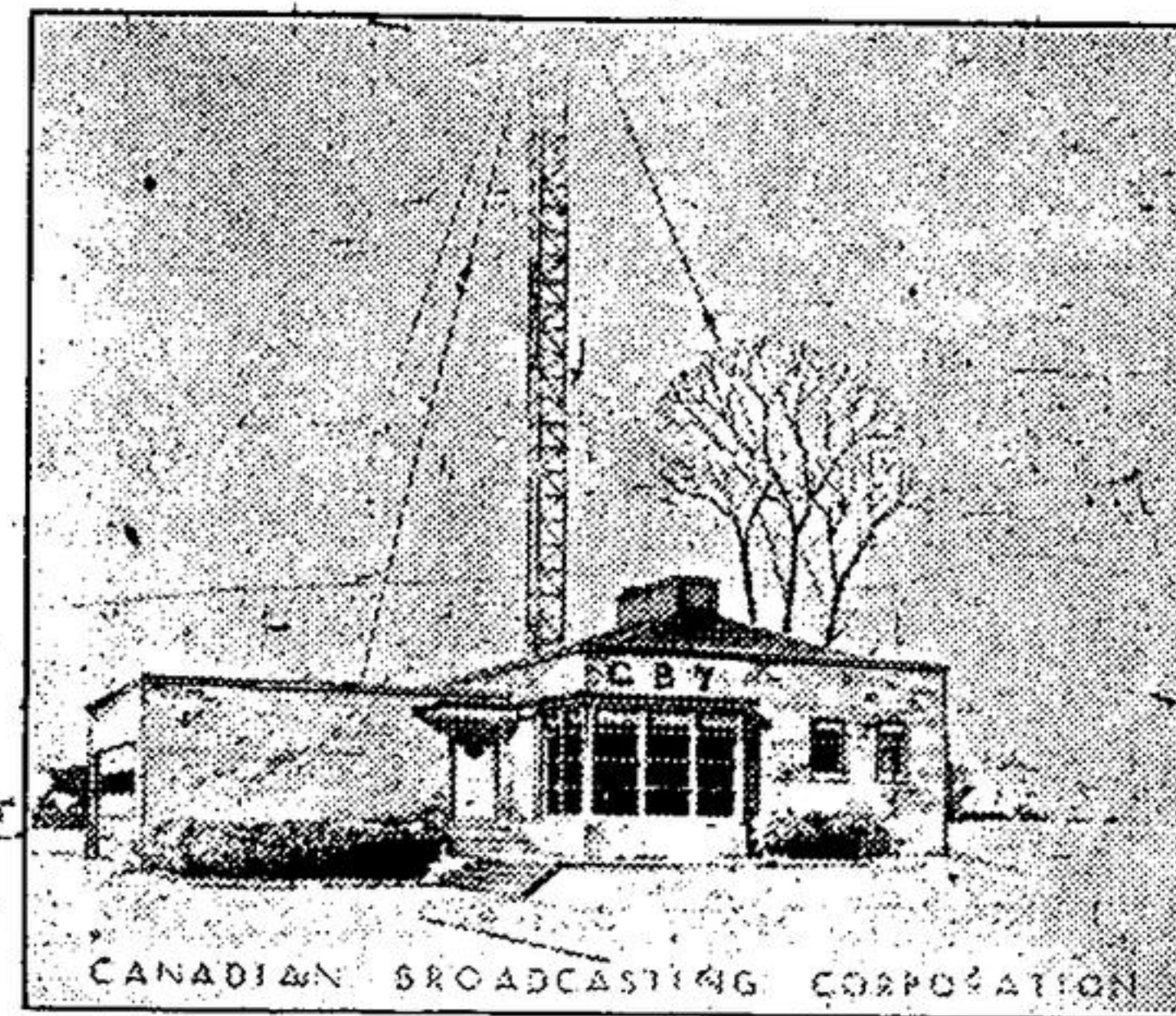


A sergeant answers many enquiries from prospective airmen at the Recruiting Centre at Winnipeg, Manitoba.—Royal Canadian Air Force Photograph



L. S. Wall is shown getting his medical test from Dr. W. M. Master, at the Windsor Recruiting Centre.—Royal Canadian Air Force Photograph

NEW TRANSMITTER OFFICIALLY OPENED YESTERDAY



Canadian Broadcasting Corporation builds new transmitter at Dixie, Ontario, to provide better programme service for Toronto's Metropolitan area.

Eight miles west of Toronto along the Dundas Highway, the new transmitter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation station, CBY, is nearing completion, and was officially opened yesterday, July 1st. A special programme inaugurated the extended service.

Station CBY, really a veteran commencing its 16th year on the air, is entering a new phase of service with its removal to a rural site and a switch-over to a 1,000-watt modern directional transmitter. Its frequency remains at 1010 Kc.

Georgetown people driving to and from Toronto having been watching with eagerness, the completion of this new transmitter by CBC's engineers. The new plant has been designed as a directional radiating system, the first one to be employed by the CBC in Canada. It has been constructed to throw a strong signal into the most densely populated sections of Toronto, whose metropolitan area it is intended to serve.

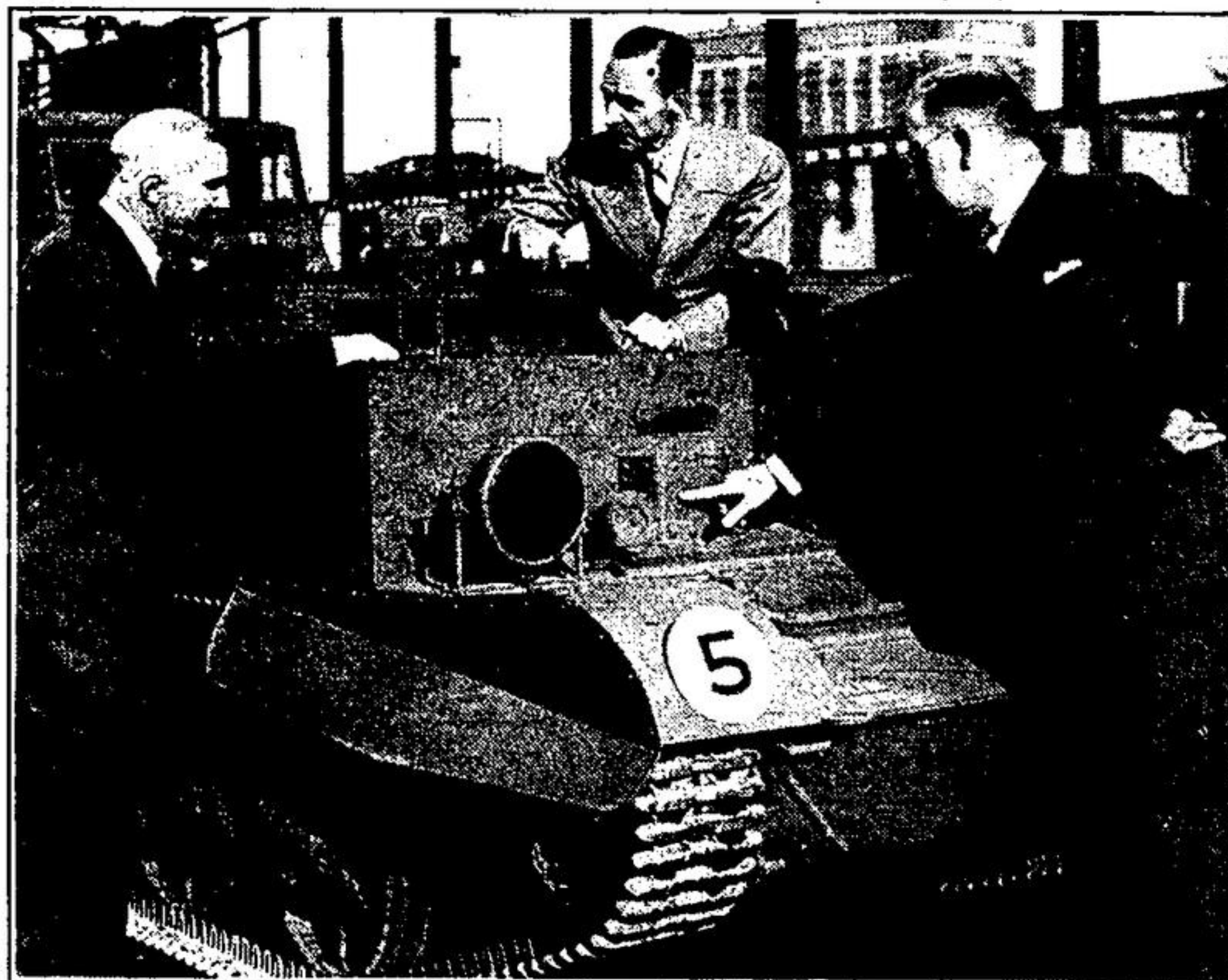
It is one of the wonders of radio engineering that a transmitter can just about point its finger at the audience it wants to attract. For instance, the structural design of CBY is complementary to its function. A directive array type of radiator has been used because the station must reach a precise audience and at the same time offset the influence of interfering noises. Sewing machines, sun lamps, dentists' drills, street cars and all the clutter of man-made disturbances which make-up the sound effects of a modern city have to be met and conquered by a strong signal such as this one being directed from CBC's new equipment in the charming rural environs of Dixie.

CBC's newest transmitter is situated right in the centre of a 30-acre level meadow land which flanks a typical market garden of the district. The approach is south of the highway just a few minutes' run from the city limits. The building which houses the transmitter is a neat one-storey structure of concrete and brick, similar to all the CBC structures of this type. It enjoys an unobstructed view of the highway and is approached down a wide road which will eventually be bordered with bright flowers. Some fine old trees stand well to the east and south of the building, but between them, in the open field, are the twin towers, two triangular steel shafts, set upon porcelain bases and spaced a quarter of a wave length apart and about 600 feet each from the transmitter building. These vertical aerials are 250 feet high but due to their small cross sections they look just as high as CBL at Hornby, Ontario, which stands 647 feet.

NICE WORK

Six Polish airmen in Spitfires in one day over France shot down a Nazi three-engined troop carrier, set afire a two-funnelled steamship, machine-gunned two other ships and six planes refuelling.

Edsel Ford Inspects Canadian War Machine



MR. EDSSEL FORD, centre, inspects an Universal carrier, produced in the Canadian Ford plant at Windsor, Ontario. Mr. Wallace R. Campbell, President of the Canadian company, is on the right, and Mr. George E. Dickert, Vice-President, on the left. Universal carriers are among the many different types of mechanical transport manufactured in the Windsor Ford plant.

Since the war began the company has supplied more than 75,000 vehicles for military use to the governments of Canada, the United Kingdom and other Empire countries.

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