

The Ninth Annual Dinner of The Helicopter Association of Great Britain

Nearly 400 Members and their Guests were present at the Ninth Annual Dinner of the Association held at the Dorchester Hotel, London, W 1, on Thursday, September 8th, 1955

Prior to the Dinner reception a paper was presented to the Association by Mr R Allen Price and Mr Frank L Stulen of the Parsons Corporation, U S A , who had been invited to open the 1955/56 Lecture Session The Paper was entitled "The Design, Development, Production and Servicing of Helicopter Rotor Blades," and a full report of the lecture is to be found in this issue of the Journal

The President of the Association, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Douglas of Kirtleside, G C B , M C , D F C , and Lady Douglas, received the following Official Guests of the Association Sir Owen Wansbrough-Jones, C B , O B E , Chief Scientist, Ministry of Supply , Mr Stanley Hiller, Jr , President of Hiller Helicopters, U S A , Mrs Hiller , Mr J J Parkes, A F R Ae S , President of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors, and Managing Director of Alvis Limited , Mrs Parkes , Mr N E Rowe, C B E , President of The Royal Aeronautical Society , Mrs Rowe , Mr R Allen Price and Mr Frank L Stulen, our Guest Lecturers , also Mr Maurice Smith, Editor "Flight," and Mr Thurstan James, Editor "The Aeroplane" Mr J G Weir, C M G , C B E , and Mrs Weir, were also Guests of the Association, and it was announced that Mr Weir, the first President of the Association, had accepted Honorary Membership, as recorded elsewhere in this Journal

Dinner being concluded by honouring the Loyal Toast, Sir OWEN WANSBROUGH-JONES proposed "The Association" He said that he did this with a sense of privilege because he believed that the Association was doing a job which was very worth while It had been founded about ten years ago and had retained the enthusiasm and vitality with which it started Its numbers and influence had grown and it had become known as a body which mattered

Of the helicopter, he said, it is like a pretty woman , very pleasant to be seen around with but rather noisy, and the more you take her out the more she costs The criteria which should be applied to the helicopter are can it do something different or something better than normal aircraft ? Is it useful ? Can it perform its function reliably ? Is it economical, and finally does it interfere with the rights of others ? The answers to these questions were generally favourable The helicopter can do work that could be done by no other means It is certainly a useful vehicle Anything which could carry 22,000 seriously wounded soldiers out of Korea, and take them back to their base was doing something which perhaps could not have been done by any other means Sir Owen thought the present reliability of the helicopter was astonishing considering that we are only now moving from the stage of single engine to twin engine, with some extremely difficult minor problems, and some aerodynamic problems yet to be solved That this should be so was a tribute to the integrity of the people working in this field

Sir Owen was of the opinion that the question of cost was surely relative. The saving of 22,000 people in Korea could not be measured in terms of money, and as long as it was appreciated that the helicopter had to be used for its right purpose, then its future was assured. He thought the question of making the helicopter "social," so that it does not interfere with the rights of others, is an extremely important one, but there had been many cases where inventions had been produced just too late to be useful and he hoped that rotating wing aircraft would be generally available while they are still wanted. Other techniques of going up vertically, or nearly vertically, were on our heels. These may not be as good but they provide keen competition which is a good incentive to further efforts.

Sir Owen concluded by quoting Ogden Nash

" I do not travel on 'planes, I travel on trains
Sometimes on the train, I am surrounded
By people whose 'planes have been grounded
That is the only trouble with trains
When it fogs or when it smogs or when it rains,
You get people from 'planes "

He suggested that perhaps we should take over the role of British Railways, and " get people from planes "

The President thanked Sir Owen and said that during the past year the Association had gone from strength to strength. Membership had been increased until it now stood at just on 500 members, but more were still wanted, particularly technical members. He mentioned that, as Chairman of B E A, he would like to see development proceeding more quickly. After reviewing briefly the helicopter activities of his Corporation, he mentioned the expanding activities of helicopter charter companies such as Fison-Airwork Ltd, Helicopter Services Ltd, Autair Ltd, and Air Service Training Ltd. In the Services too, helicopters had been used extensively, and had been employed for the first time in Kenya for military and rescue work. Helicopters had been chartered during the current year for oil exploration in the Persian Gulf and New Guinea. He thought it to be very significant indeed that the Royal Family has " taken to helicopters ". The Duke of Edinburgh is a regular passenger in a helicopter and is already an accomplished helicopter pilot.

Saying that they included many distinguished people from this country and overseas, Lord Douglas then proposed the health of the Guests.

In reply to the Toast, Mr STANLEY HILLER, thanked the Association for its hospitality. After mentioning some of the outstanding British achievements in the helicopter field which were in evidence at the S B A C Show at Farnborough, he went on to say that it should be expected in the helicopter industry that new and unconventional looking rotorcraft would appear on the scene and possibilities of expanding the field of production should not be overlooked. He likened the world's aviation industry to an elephant and the rotating wing branch of the Industry to an ant. If we worked together and shared information it was possible that the small ant could make a definite bite on the elephant.

He thought that the sights should be set at transport operations but reminded his audience that the trends of development of the industry were not dictated by civilian requirements but by military planning and guidance.