

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is indeed the romance of the air. I have found the paper most interesting and enjoyable, as I am sure you all have. I have now much pleasure in declaring the meeting open for discussion.

LIEUT.-COL. EDWARDS: I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Hinkler on his most excellent and interesting paper. Secondly, I would thank Major Robertson for having so ably delivered it.

Australia is, without doubt, the only colony which has seriously taken up aviation, for she is the only colony that has kept civil aviation going. Also she is to be congratulated on her very great efficiency of services, and the long view she has taken in organising them. Other colonies have as great possibilities, but have not utilised them.

It is a remarkable thing that a colony so far removed as Australia should possess the longest passenger and commercial route, namely, that which now exists between Perth and Derby. That route is being operated with very great regularity, and I do not think Mr. Hinkler drew quite enough attention to the difficulties, which are very considerable. In spite of these, however, they manage to maintain 100 per cent. efficiency.

I think that with the exception of Australia the Colonies do not realise the benefit which civil aviation will be in developing them. For instance, in sparsely populated areas the difficulty of road or other forms of communication is immense. For example, in India the need for commercial routes is very great, and civil aviation can be, and should be, employed there.

There were several points to which Mr. Hinkler did not draw attention. With regard to the flights of Wing Commander Goble and Col. Brinsmead; the former did the journey in 22 days, and the latter in 14 days. Col. Brinsmead reports that the whole cost of replacements on the 7,500 miles flown was 21/-. That is cheap!

That Australia is beginning to realise the need for aviation is demonstrated by the fact that recently a petition was received by the Federal Government for an extension of the Qantas Service beyond Commoweal.

In conclusion, I would again thank the Lecturer for a most interesting paper.

CAPTAIN SAYERS: Like previous speakers, it is very necessary that I should emphasize the extraordinary interest of this paper. As a matter of fact, there being no advance copies, it is more or less impossible to fully appreciate the paper.

It does seem to me to inculcate a lesson which I have endeavoured to enforce before. When people started commercial aviation here they took two large cities which already had other means of communication. That service has been running a fair number of years, and is not getting enough

traffic to pay, and I do not think it will under present conditions. As I have suggested to people interested, if they want to make aircraft pay they should look for routes on which there is at present no other communication (and, therefore, no traffic). In Australia, where regular services are running along lines on which no other means exist, you find that those air lines are competing extremely well with the best we are doing in this country. The fact of the matter is that at present the aeroplane has one advantage over railways, and that is low initial capital and expenditure. You cannot afford to expend a large initial capital if you are not going to have a fairly good traffic to start with; so that is where the aeroplane should score. The intrinsic high cost of the aeroplane service does not matter, because it enables you to do something which you could not do with any other form of transport. You have, therefore, to take every possible advantage of the low initial cost, and must, therefore, establish your air routes on those which have no other means of transport. I think that the odd million pounds which the Government is putting into our schemes would be ten times as high if they were in Australia or Canada than they are ever likely to be in this country.

MAJOR ROBERTSON: Naturally, though I have never been in Australia, I have been studying the question closely, and I think that if Mr. Hinkler were here he would probably point out in the discussion the extraordinary way in which the West Australian line created its own traffic. I am informed that when it was started the settlers rather laughed at it. They had been so accustomed to isolation that they had lost the habit of writing letters, and did not care about travelling. When the aeroplane first started they sent a letter perhaps for a joke, but when they found that regularly week by week one aeroplane went north and another south, they acquired the habit of writing letters and travelling, and so the West Australian air route has built up its own traffic. I think it is quite safe to say that if for any reason the services should stop it would be regarded as a calamity by all the settlers within a reasonable distance of that route. I do not think we could say the same about the London-Paris services.

I might add to the other achievements of Australia that it is the only part of the Empire outside London in which there exists a paper devoted entirely to the interests of aviation. I refer to "Aircraft," which is the official organ of this Institution in Australia.

CHAIRMAN: It now remains to propose that our Secretary be requested to heartily thank Mr. Hinkler for his most interesting paper to-night. It is also my pleasant duty to propose a very hearty vote of thanks to Major Robertson, who has so splendidly fulfilled the function of Lecturer.

The votes of thanks were passed with acclamation, and the meeting then closed.