

FLIGHT

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AIRSHIPS

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DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Club Secretaries and others desirous of announcing the dates of important fixtures are invited to send particulars for inclusion in the following list:

- Jan. 20 ... Lecture, "The Cost of Air-Ton-Miles, Compared with other Forms of Transport," by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, before R.Ae.S.
- Feb. 20-22 Aero Club of France Grand Prix
- Mar. 20-22 Aero Club of France Grand Prix
- April 20-22 Aero Club of France Grand Prix

EDITORIAL COMMENT

PARTURIUNT montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. After all that has been said about the seriousness with which the present position of civil aviation is regarded by the Government and of the concrete schemes of encouragement it was proposed to extend to the industry, we now know exactly what is to be done. Having saved a clear £500,000 on the civil side of the Air Estimates, the Cabinet has generously decided to subsidise the air lines operating from this country to places across the narrow seas, and any others which may be prompted by this unexampled generosity to come into the business, to the tune of £60,000 during the next financial year. It is a little better than nothing, but not much.

Encouraging Civil Aviation

Far be it from us to look the gift horse in the mouth, or to join issue with the principle involved in the proposed subsidies to the air lines, but we cannot help expressing the view that it is wrong from two points of view. In the first place, the sum allocated is not enough. The Advisory Committee, which was appointed for the express purpose of advising the Government as to the shape and scope of the assistance to civil aviation which is, and may become, necessary, laid down that £250,000 should be spent over a period of two years, at the end of which time the whole situation could be reviewed. After a careful study of the facts on which the Advisory Committee based its advice, we remain of opinion that if that Committee erred at all it was on the side of making its estimate of requirements too small to be thoroughly effective. However, let the Committee's figure stand. We now see that what the Cabinet proposes to do is to allocate a sum of, roughly, half the annual grant advised, and to pay it for one year instead of two.

Apart from the parsimoniously small sum to be made available, we seriously question the policy of a grant for a single year. There is nothing so desirable in these things as looking ahead and arranging for continuity of policy. It has always been a weakness of British Governments that they have conducted their legislative affairs on a hand-to-mouth principle, and not seldom the consequences have been well-nigh disastrous. We had a lurid example years ago, when this want of a continuous policy landed us in a huge expenditure on the Navy under what was known as the Spencer programme. Money had been grudged and shipbuilding allowed to fall into arrears until we were awakened to the realisation that we were hopelessly inferior in naval strength to the next two naval Powers—those were the days of the "Two-Power standard"—and it cost the country many millions to overtake the consequences of the penny wise, pound foolish, policy of successive Cabinets.

That is what seems likely to happen in connection with civil aviation, to which we have to look to provide the bulk of our fighting air forces in the day of emergency. France is fast going ahead of us. Germany is making strenuous preparations to challenge the rest of the world in the air. We are footling and fooling with the proposition, and regarding it, apparently, as one of those things the consideration