

When the Hambling report was first published, and on several occasions subsequently, we called attention to some of the more dangerous possibilities, such as that the new company might decide to construct its own machines, or acquire control of an existing aircraft construction firm, or standardise with a view to economy in first cost and maintenance a type of machine suitable for one particular route, but not necessarily for all those contemplated, or that seaplanes might be left out of consideration altogether. All these possibilities would have meant a hampering of progress, and would have resulted in the country not getting full value for the money expended on subsidies. We are glad to note from the text of the agreement that these dangerous possibilities have not been overlooked, and that as a matter of fact provision has been made for preventing any such retrograde steps being taken.

The new company will combine the four existing companies, who will be represented on the board of directors, and the existing lines will be continued and extended if, in the opinion of the directors, such extensions are practicable and advisable. Two directors will be appointed by the President of the Air Council to represent the Government, and officers of the Air Ministry are to have full access to all technical and operational information collected by the company. Thus a balance should be struck between the various interests: the operating company, the four existing companies, the Treasury and the Air Ministry.

It is specifically stated that the company shall not, except with the consent of the President of the Air Council, undertake the manufacture of aircraft or engines, and shall not hold shares in any aircraft or aero-engine construction firm, and that all such construction and repairs shall be carried out by British firms, the machines used to be of British design and manufacture. A further important clause in the agreement states that the company shall, when required by the President of the Air Council, try out under conditions as near as may be to the ordinary conditions of business experimental types of aircraft constructed for the President, provided such aircraft have passed their tests at Government establishments. Thus development should not be hampered by too early standardisation.

Concerning the financial side of the question there seems to be little need of comment. The sliding scale upon which the amounts payable each year

are arranged seems sound, giving the greatest amount of support during the first years, when presumably it will be most required, and proportionately less as the end of the ten years' period is approached. The amount involved, one million sterling, is by no means excessive, the average being, in fact, proportionately less than that now being paid to the separate companies.

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 "Dixmude" The terrible calamity which has overtaken the French airship "Dixmude" will awaken the most sincere sympathy all over the world. We in this country can the more readily appreciate the great loss as we have suffered a very similar bereavement in the fatal accident to the "R.38" over the Humber. There is, in fact, considerable similarity between the two catastrophes. Both airships carried more than their normal crew. Both carried a number of highly-placed officials, and both involved the loss of some of the greatest airship experts of each country. To the many messages of sympathy sent to France from this country, beginning with one from the King, we would add one on behalf of all readers of FLIGHT, who feel very keenly the loss sustained, not only by France but by the aviation communities of the entire world.

As to the causes of the accident, no definite information has yet come to hand. It appears probable, however, that the ill-fated airship caught fire, either through breaking up as did the "R.38," or through being struck by lightning. It also seems that the staff work was not all that it might have been, and an inquiry is being held into the conditions under which the cruise was undertaken.

Briefly the lesson to be learned seems to be that it is unwise to send out any airship unless suitable bases are provided at points always within reach from the route followed, and that a lightly-built airship like the "Dixmude" is not suitable for prolonged journeys far from a base. The calamity cannot fail to have its effect on the proposed Burney airship scheme, and rather seems to lend strength to the plea repeatedly made in these columns for extensive research into airship problems before the construction of five-million cubic feet ships is undertaken. It seems probable that a few thousands wisely spent on research may be the means of saving millions later, to put the matter on no higher level than that, and leaving out the consideration of possible loss of valuable, nay, irreplaceable, lives.



Air Vice-Marshal Higgins taking Charge in Iraq

It is announced that Air Vice-Marshal J. F. A. Higgins, C.B., D.S.O., A.F.C., Air Officer Commanding Inland Area, Royal Air Force, will succeed Air Marshal Sir John M. Salmond, K.C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O., as Air Officer Commanding H.M. Forces in Iraq, from April next. Air Vice-Marshal Higgins will leave this country for Iraq in February.

An announcement will be issued later of other appointments to the higher commands of the Royal Air Force consequent upon the present intimation.

Melbourne to Sydney in a Fairey

NEWS has just come to hand of the first official seaplane flight from Melbourne to Sydney, made on November 15, 1923, by one of the Australian Naval Air Service Fairey III.D seaplanes, fitted with Rolls-Royce "Eagle VIII" engine.

Leaving Point Cook at 5 a.m. and proceeding along the coast, via Port Albert, Paynesville, Marlo, Gabo, and Twofold Bay, the seaplane landed at Eden at 9 a.m., having covered a distance of roughly 500 miles. Some delay was experienced owing to the petrol refill not being available on time. How-

ever, the journey was resumed at noon, and Sydney was reached at 3.9 p.m., giving a total of about 7 hours' travelling time, this latter stage being from 250 to 300 miles.

The seaplane was in charge of Flying Officer I. E. McIntyre, Wing Commander Goble acted as navigating officer, and a mechanic was included in the personnel.

This flight is remarkable in that it is the first occasion on which a flight of this extensive nature has been made in Australia, and it is, of course, the first time that a seaplane has completed the journey along the coast from Melbourne to Sydney.

The machine used is one of a batch of Fairey III.D seaplanes supplied to the Australian Naval Air Service. It is identical with those used by the British Air Service in the recent operations in Chanak, Turkey, and other places, the Australian Government having adopted the policy of using the same machines as the British Government for similar purposes.

It has been pointed out by Australian Air Force officials that the New South Wales coast is considered particularly suitable for seaplane flights, owing to the numerous inlets and protected waters.