

would not have occurred, and so in the end the company itself is to a great extent responsible for "the very adverse effect on operations" which this dispute is claimed to have had.

In the matter of machines, it is an open secret that the company let its fleet dwindle until only a very few machines were in operation, and although the report does not appear to make any reference to this state of affairs, it is fairly obvious that the question of the amount of flying done must have had a serious effect upon returns.

Personally, we are of the opinion that failure to attract the right kind of traffic in sufficient volume is likely to have been responsible to a very much larger extent than any shortcomings in the machines as regards being "commercially economical" types. Nor are we at all convinced that under the new subsidy basis, whereby not machine-miles flown but horse-power miles are to be the standard by which the operations are judged, is likely to lead to any great improvement. It may be granted that the new large and powerful machines which are coming along will be more economical in that they will carry, on any one flight, a larger number of passengers, and that, therefore, such costs as pilots' salaries, &c., which are independent of the number of passengers or weight of load carried, will not increase in proportion. On the other hand, as Major C. C. Turner pointed out at the last monthly Royal Aero Club dinner, it would seem that the new basis will be likely to result in considerably fewer flights being made, and this would certainly tend to discourage rather than encourage air travellers. Take the London-Paris route. If a business man is assured that if he goes to Croydon almost any time of the day, he will not have to wait very long before there is a machine leaving, he is much more likely to use the air service than if there is but one machine per day, which may leave at a time that does not suit his particular arrangements. And as we have previously pointed out, in our view, improvement is to be found rather in attracting greater traffic than in any possible vast improvements in the machines. While, therefore, we do agree that, as regards safety and reliability, the new large machines will, in all probability, represent a considerable improvement, we are not nearly so certain that they will, unless a very large number of them is used *and filled*, be economically better. It seems to stand to reason that it is cheaper to run a small machine with full load than a large machine with half or quarter load.

Another line of improvement would seem to be the use of particular types of machines for particular purposes.

Air Control

One is curiously reminded of the old doggerel "Little satisfaction some men find in life, Some want quick divorces, others want a wife," by two newspaper paragraphs published on the same day, December 12. In one reference is made to the coming fight for a single air service, which certain parties in the United States desire, claiming that separate air services for army and navy lead to overlapping and waste. The other foreshadows a revival in Great Britain of the fight for a separate air arm for each of the services. Thus we have the somewhat curious spectacle of one nation with divided air services wanting a single air service, and another which, having at great trouble secured a single service, wants to split it up again.

FLIGHT's attitude is too well known to need reiteration here. We initiated, and have always stood for, the slogan "One service, one uniform, one badge," and we have so far seen nothing in this or any other country to give us cause to change our opinion. That the fight will be revived in this country, particularly over the airship question, we have not the slightest doubt, nor are we at all sure that there would be much harm in handing airships over to the Navy, although by its earlier attitude towards "gas bags" the Navy has done little to deserve being put in charge, but the design, construction and operation of airships are so much more parallel with maritime problems, than heavier-than-air craft, that a very good case could be made out. As regards the Royal Air Force, however, we entirely disagree with the validity of the Navy's claims, nor have we any fear that the Admiralty will succeed in the fight, the revival of which is foreshadowed.

Airship Clubs

As briefly recorded elsewhere in this issue, Commander F. L. M. Boothby is reviving the idea of forming a club for the encouragement of airship flying. It is quite a long time since Commander Boothby first suggested this scheme, and at the time we welcomed it in FLIGHT as an aid to revive the interest in airships and as a means of, if not training airship pilots, at any rate of giving flying practice to the few who still remain.

Under the new scheme, which we understand Commander Boothby has placed before the Air Ministry, it is suggested that, as but five out of the six light aeroplane clubs originally contemplated have come into being, the Air Ministry has the subsidy intended for one club, *i.e.*, about £3,000, going begging, and that this might be devoted to assist in the formation and operation of an airship club. The idea is quite a reasonable one. We seem to be determined to go on with airships sometime, and that being so we shall want pilots and we shall want crews, and we shall want experience. Such a club as that suggested should do much towards developing the "lighter-than-air" sense (in more ways than one), and thus should be deserving of support. Commander Boothby is reported to have got an option, at £1,500, on the small airship prepared for the Algarsson expedition, so that out of the Air Ministry's £3,000 there should still be a reasonable amount left towards initial expenses in formation of club and preparation of hangar accommodation, which it is hoped to obtain either at Bedford or at Pulham. The scheme does not appear to be at all an unreasonable one, and the Air Ministry might do worse than fall in with Commander Boothby's suggestion. It is likely, however, that this year the existing light 'plane clubs will want a good deal of support, and the Air Ministry may possibly desire to reserve any surplus for assistance in this direction. Frankly we have not overmuch hope of the suggestion being adopted. But as the Navy is now evincing a certain interest in airships, why not let the Senior Service come forward and help the scheme through its initial stages? If airships are ultimately to be handed over to the Navy, this step would seem to be a logical one. The airship members would be "yachtsmen of the air." What more natural than that the Navy should help them a little. And the Navy has much more money to play with than has the Air Ministry.