



CARGO ELDORADO

Australia's Airlines Seize an Opportunity

By JOHN LOUGHLIN

AUSTRALIAN airline companies are discovering fresh and lush fields to conquer, for almost every week reveals to them a new angle to the cargo-carrying potentialities of aircraft. Until recent years, this branch of air transport was somewhat neglected in the scramble for the more glamorous passenger business offered by an air-minded population. Such oversights, in lands where aviation advances have been otherwise swift and spectacular have occurred in other countries, despite the fact that the mainstay of sea, rail, and road transport is their operation as common carriers.

But now Australia's airlines see freighting as ripe for exploitation, and they are falling upon it with as much gusto as their special difficulties permit. Commerce and industry, with their problems of vast distances between the main centres of population, and scarcely adequate surface transport, are welcoming it with exclamations of surprise and satisfaction.

Both terrain and climatic conditions are uniformly favourable for flying. Mountain hazards are few and comparatively innocuous; Mt. Kosciusko, 7,328ft, is the highest peak. Flying schedules are rarely liable to be thrown into a tangle by weather fronts. The freight office

can confidently promise its clients that their goods will get there, and on time, and that unpredictable weather is extremely unlikely to rob them of the advantages of air over surface transport.

With business booming, it is little wonder that airline executives chafe under the one common restraint that prevents them from giving freight expansion full throttle—the dollar shortage which means, for the airways, petrol rationing. They must devote their ingenuity to the most profitable development of freighting within the limits of existing route mileage. While this may encourage economic operations, it imposes a check on the adventuring spirit. Air freighting, however, has already reached the stage where it is no longer merely ancillary to passenger carrying. Passenger aircraft still lift much of the freight, but special freighters are increasingly taking over.

Though big freighting jobs belong to the war-time and post-war periods, one of the most spectacular feats of aviation at any time or place was the lifting of heavy mining machinery in New Guinea in 1926. In three-engined converted Ju 52s Australian airmen flew thousands of tons of dredging machinery over 12,000-ft mountains for assembly at alluvial gold workings at Bulolo.

Prize sheep go to a show in an A.N.A. DC-3.

Cargo for a Skymaster operated by Australian National Airways.

