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CIVIL

AVIATION

PREVIEW: Two well-known airline executives
inspect progress at Johannesburg's £6m Jan
Smuts Airport, due to be opened later this year;
Sir Miles Thomas {left), chairman of B.O.A.C.,
and Gen. C. J. Venter, general manager of
South African Airways.

AFRICAN ANNIVERSARY
"DEGULAR air services between Britain and South Africa Av recently celebrated their "coming-of-age." On January 20th, 1932, the Handley Page H.P. 42 Helena left Croydon on the first regular air mail and parcel service between Croydon and Cape Town. The 8,000-mile journey took nearly twelve days and was carried out in several stages. The H.P. 42's payload was taken by rail from Paris to Brindisi and thence to Cairo by Short Kent flying-boat. A three-engined Armstrong Whitworth Argosy air liner continued the journey to Khartoum. It was at that time impossible to use landplanes on the section between Khartoum and Kisumu (Kenya) in the rainy season since the aerodromes became waterlogged, and this part of the route was flown by Short Calcutta flying-boat. The remainder of the journey was made by D.H. Hercules. The service was opened to passengers the follow-ing April, and two years later Johannesburg became the South African terminal for Imperial Airways.
Today the London-Johannesburg, or Springbok, route is jointly operated by B.O.A.C. and South African Airways, who pool route facilities and share the revenue from the six weekly return flights—three operated by each airline. B.O.A.C. employ Comets, which complete the journey in about 24 hours, and S.A.A. use Constellations, which take six to eight hours longer. Standard return fare on the route is £315, but this will become the first-class fare for Comet passengers only when Constellation "tourist" flights begin on October 1st.
As reported exclusively in Flight of January 9th, increased use of Comets may result from the need to maintain the frequency of first-class services and it has been proposed that South African Airways be permitted to hire Comets from B.O.A.C. According to a South African newspaper, Sir Miles Thomas said recently in Johannesburg that frequency of Comet services would be stepped up to four weekly from October 1st, of which two would be manned by South African crews. South African Airways have recently lost several pilots to other companies and sixteen pilot-navigators were recently transferred from the S.A.A.F. to civil aviation to make good those losses; six of them are already under-going special navigational training in Britain and three more are expected to arrive later. It appears that one of B.O.A.C.'s Comet is will be re-painted with the S.A.A. insignia, although there is no question of the South African company purchasing the aircraft; it will simply "hire Comet hours" from the Corporation. So far B.O.A.C. has made no official comment on these reports and the plan is at present believed to be the subject of discussions between the Corporation and representatives of Comet flight crews. Neither has it been stated whether B.O.A.C. will operate any of the new cut-fare (£252 return) services to Johannesburg.

BACK AT WORK

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HE grounding of B.O.A.C.'s entire fleet of ten Stratocruisers, which lasted from Thursday, January 22nd, until the following Thursday, is estimated to have cost the Corporation over £10,000 a day. Cause of the seized bearings which necessitated the grounding was excessive dilution of engine oil with petrol, a procedure intended to facilitate cold-weather starting. .

SKYWAYS YORK LOST

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T the time of going to press there was little hope of survival for

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the 39 people aboard a Skyways York reported missing
over the Atlantic on Monday. Flying from Stansted to Kingston, Jamaica, under contract to the War Office, the aircraft sent out two W/T. distress signals on the Azores-Gander leg, the last of which, at 5.48 a.m., gave its position as "100 minutes from Gander". Six R.C.A.F. Lancasters and surface vessels searched the area but reported no trace. The passengers consisted often Servicemen and members of their families—ten women and 13 children; the crew was under the command of Capt. D. Nicholls.

VISCOUNT'S CANADIAN TOUR

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ATER this month the prototype Vickers Viscount 700, suitably
•* modified for cold-weather operation, will be flown across the North Atlantic to Canada. During the following six weeks it will fly over the routes of Trans-Canada Air Lines (who have ordered 15 Viscounts), including those running into the United States. The Viscount is thus likely to become the first British turbine-powered civil aircraft to be demonstrated in America. A number of American airline executives are expected to visit Montreal to inspect the aircraft and discuss its performance with Mr. George Edwards, Vickers Armstrongs' chief designer. It will be remem-bered that the T.C.A. order was largely due to the persistence and enterprise of Mr. Edwards, who personally flew to Canada at a time when a contract for Convair 340s was all but signed. The manufacturers' chief test pilot, Mr. "Jock" Bryce, will captain the Viscount on its Canadian tour.

M.C.A. LEAVES YEADON

"DRESENT uncertainty concerning the future of Yeadon aero-•V drome, Yorkshire, has been recently expressed in Parliament. In reply to a question by Mr. W. Taylor in the House of Commons on January 21st, Mr. Profumo, M.C.A. Parliamentary Secretary, stated "The requirements of air transport services do not justify my Ministry maintaining Yeadon as a civil aerodrome . . . under present plans, my Department will withdraw its staff from the aerodrome on 2nd February, 1953. I am afraid that I cannot undertake to ensure that the existing facilities are maintained in good repair because the future use of the aerodrome is a matter for the Air Ministry, as the requisitioning authority, and the two Corporations [of Leeds and Bradford]."
The future of Yeadon is obviously a matter for concern, also, for the operating company based there, Lancashire Aircraft Corporation, who, since their tenancy agreement with the M.C.A. in 1946, have strongly desired to be responsible for the manage-ment of the aerodrome. This had not been permitted by the M.C.A., while in charge, and the Leeds and Bradford Joint Aerodrome Committee had declined to express an opinion before derequisition. In December last, the company re-affirmed its dissatisfaction at the existing arrangement, and stated that their agreement would have to be terminated, if no new arrangement could be made.

On Monday last, February 2nd, the M.C.A. carried out its intention to withdraw its services and personnel from Yeadon, with the result that, at the time of going to press, Lancashire was unable to carry out any flying operations at all from that base. Discussions are continuing between the Air Ministry, the Joint Aerodrome Committee, and the operating company ; the main question objpously being whether the Air Ministry will now derequisition the aerodrome or not.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER AIRLINE RESULTS

OVER the five-week period July 27th-August 30th, 1952,

B.O.A.C. flew nearly 100m passenger-miles, 20 per cent more than during the corresponding period last year.' Increases were most marked on the western routes. In the four-week period ended September 27th, the Corporation's passenger traffic, at 87m passenger-miles, showed a 15 per cent increase.
B.E.A. carried more passengers than ever before in the calendar month of August, 1952—a total of 200,000. Increases in passenger traffic were some 36 per cent on domestic routes and 20 per cent on international services. In September, when B.E.A. carried 175,000 people, the passenger-traffic increases were 20 per cent (domestic) and 14 per cent (international). B.E.A.'s aircraft flew 50.8m passenger-miles last August and 45.8m in September. Services flown by independent operators were responsible for 4.8m passenger-miles in August and 3.3m in September—an average increase of 144 per cent compared with figures for the