

FROM ALL QUARTERS

The B.E.A. Jet Deadlock

COMPETITION within the industry to secure the order for the new B.E.A. jet airliner reached a critical point just after Christmas. It was reported on December 27 that Bristol and the Hawker Siddeley group were planning to merge and to form, as a first step, a joint company to finance and develop the project. The report of the planned merger was not denied (it was described as "conjecture") but both companies confirmed that a joint proposal on the B.E.A. jet had been made to the Ministry of Supply.

The extent to which this new move affects an already delicate situation (*Flight*, December 20) is not easy to assess, but it is likely to frustrate yet again B.E.A.'s wish to see work started soon on a 600 m.p.h., 100-passenger jet airliner for delivery in 1963.

The Bristol/Hawker Siddeley proposals appeared as a dramatic move to focus Government attention upon a firm "amalgamation" proposal. The Government have been using the B.E.A. jet order as an instrument in their policy of encouraging industrial re-grouping. The Minister of Supply has, in effect, said: "Amalgamation first, B.E.A. contract second."

The fact remains that B.E.A. have selected the de Havilland project—the D.H.121 (Lord Douglas made this choice last August). And the managing director of the de Havilland Aircraft Co., Ltd., Mr. A. F. Burke, has observed: "When B.O.A.C. wanted to buy American jets the opinion was strongly expressed that they should be permitted to have the aircraft of their choice. Should it not be the same today if B.E.A. wish to have the de Havilland jet airliner?"

It may well be asked whether the Government can now say to B.E.A. that, because the Bristol-Hawker proposals provide for the amalgamation of those two companies, it is therefore in the national interest for the Corporation to change its mind. This might be reasonable if the de Havilland proposals exclude the possibility of industrial amalgamation. So far as can be ascertained, this is not the case. It is understood that the de Havilland scheme—although not involving overnight mergers (which D.H. vehemently feel would cause chaos, friction and the exodus of technicians)—does in fact point the way to re-grouping in the natural course of events. Rolls-Royce (three of whose RB.141s are to power the D.H.121) and Bristol would be the main partners in the D.H. scheme; and believed also to be involved are Handley Page, Fairey, Hunting, Saunders-Roe, and certain component, instrument and equipment firms. All these organizations, with D.H. as design-leaders, and probably under the *aegis* of a joint company, would finance, design, develop and produce the D.H. 121 for B.E.A. and for export.

It now remains to be seen whether the Government will continue to insist on the prerequisite of amalgamations or whether they will accede to the view that technical considerations must come first, with mergers as a natural sequel.

SR.177 Cancellation

FOLLOWING the rejection of the type by Federal Germany, the cancellation of the Saunders-Roe SR.177 project was announced by the company and the Ministry of Supply on December 27. This decision is expected to result in serious unemployment in the Isle of Wight, where between 1,000 and 2,000 workers are likely to be declared redundant. The company statement was as follows:—

"Saunders-Roe have been advised that the Federal German Government do not intend to take any share in the development of the SR.177 mixed-powerplant interceptor.

"It is further understood from the Ministry of Supply that this project is to be cancelled as the SR.177 does not fit in with the terms of the 1957 Defence White Paper and will, therefore, not be required by the

Royal Air Force: the Naval requirement does not demand a sufficient quantity to justify the cost of development for this Service alone.

"Very serious redundancy within Saunders-Roe must be expected, which will be confined mainly to the Isle of Wight factories."

The Ministry of Supply, in its announcement, said that the aircraft "commands general recognition as an excellent and unique design in its class," but that it no longer fitted into the broad pattern of the U.K. defence programme. This programme visualized the English Electric P.1 as the last manned fighter for the R.A.F. There had been a Royal Navy requirement for the SR.177, but this involved a relatively small number.

It had been decided, the M.o.S. statement continued, that this Naval requirement "might prove financially feasible" if a German order for the SR.177 were forthcoming. The German Government was informed that Britain was unable to finance this aircraft solely for the U.K. defence programme, and that the project would be ended by December 31, 1957, if the German Defence Ministry had not indicated a firm requirement by that date.

According to a Bonn report, news of the German rejection of the SR.177 was given in a letter to Mr. Aubrey Jones on December 24. The four aircraft reported to be still under consideration by Germany are the English Electric P.1, Lockheed F-104 Starfighter, Grumman Super-Tiger and Northrop N-156.

At the Saunders-Roe factory at East Cowes it was stated that a minimum of 1,000 workers would have to be dismissed because of redundancy. These dismissals were expected to be completed by the end of January.

As described in *Flight* of October 18, 1957, the SR.177 was to have been a development of the SR.53. The second prototype SR.53 was flown for the first time by S/L. J. S. Booth, the company's chief test pilot, at Boscombe Down on December 18. Like the first, it is powered by a D.H. Spectre rocket engine and an Armstrong Siddeley Viper turbojet; but it has "a considerably greater capacity of rocket propellant."

The New Year Honours

A KNIGHTHOOD for Mr. Gerard d'Erlanger, chairman of B.O.A.C., was among those announced in the New Year Honours last Wednesday. Mr. Hayne Constant, Director of the National Gas Turbine Establishment, is appointed C.B., as is Mr. J. E. Serby, Director-General of Guided Weapons. C.B.E.s include Mr. W. A. Summers, managing director of Hunting Aircraft, Ltd., and Mr. Keith Granville, B.O.A.C.'s commercial director. A number of honours in the Military Divisions are given on p. 25, and full lists of both civil and Service awards will appear next week.

Air Chief Marshal Boothman

AS we go to press we learn with deep regret that Air Chief Marshal Sir John Nelson Boothman, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C., died on December 29 at the age of 56. Among his many achievements was the winning of the Schneider Trophy outright for Britain in 1931 in the Supermarine S.6B at an average speed of 342 m.p.h.; and in 1944, as A.O.C. the photographic reconnaissance group of Coastal Command, he won an immediate D.F.C. for his P.R. flights over the invasion beaches on D-day. From May 1956 he was technical sales director of Kelvin and Hughes, Ltd. A fuller appreciation will be published next week.

U.S. Bombardment Missiles

DURING testimony before the U.S. Senate last month the U.S.A.F. Secretary, Mr. James Douglas, stated that the first squadron of IRBMs was "slated to go into operation in the United Kingdom in December 1958." Since preliminary discussions on

EGYPTIAN JUBILEE: Displayed at Almaza airfield on December 19, in celebration of the silver jubilee of the Egyptian Air Force, are (left) two Mi-1 helicopters; (upper left) a Mig-17 fighter with reheat; then, reading clockwise, a Mig-15bis; an Il-28 light bomber; a Yak-11 advanced trainer; and two Czech Zlin 226s. The tail framing the picture at bottom right is apparently that of an Il-14.

