



A big moment for Canadian Pacific: their first Bristol Britannia 314, on a quick pre-delivery visit to Vancouver from Bristol on February 22, is seen lined up for a ceremonial entry into C.P.A.L.'s new Britannia hangar. Watching outside are some of the 3,500 airline staff and families present: in the background is a T.C.A. Argonaut, and across the other side of Vancouver International Airport is the R.C.A.F. base.

By J. M. RAMSDEN

ILLUSTRATED WITH "FLIGHT"
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

Vancouver-Return by C.P.A.L. Britannia

Canadian Pacific Prepare for Their New Fleet

INSIDE his new \$1.4 million Britannia hangar at Vancouver International Airport last week the president of Canadian Pacific Airlines pressed a switch, and upon the instant the power-operated doors slid back to reveal his first Britannia 314. Immaculate in her red and white paint-scheme, and with the myriad rooflights of the hangar mirrored in her burnished bulk, C.P.A.L.'s new *Empress*-class airliner proudly made her entrance to the strains of *Rule, Britannia!* From where I stood I could just see the sousaphones of the local brass band bobbing above the intervening heads of 3,500 cheering C.P.A.L. employees and their families.

It was quite a moment for Mr. Grant McConachie, who was delightedly shaking hands with everyone in reach—Mr. Norman Crump, president of C.P.R.; Mr. Peter Masefield, managing director of Bristol Aircraft; Mr. Otto Safir, architect of the hangar; and the Mayor of Vancouver, and other civic dignitaries.

One might almost say that this moment was the fulfilment of Grant McConachie's long and unswerving championship of British transport aircraft. The Britannia concerned, CF-CZA, was the first of six 314s ordered by C.P.A.L., built on the Short Brothers and Harland "second-source" Britannia line at Belfast.

Our flight from Bristol to Vancouver had been made expressly to provide the ceremonial opening of C.P.A.L.'s new Britannia hangar with the appropriate *panache*. It was not a delivery flight or a route-proving flight; much work remains to be done before this aeroplane can be delivered—an event which Bristol hope, and C.P.A.L. expect, will take place on March 29. It was primarily a test-flight, with Shorts and Bristol men at work, and senior C.P.A.L. crews under training.

As a passenger, I was able to renew my experience of test-flying in a commodious transport, an experience with its own special mixed brand of business and mateyness. No one minds if you pass the night curled up on the floor (it's warm near the floor-level warm-air grilles), play a foursome of pontoon on the flight spares pack, or help yourself from the galley's plentiful reservoir of orange juice. But you have to keep out of the way if someone wants to press a thermocouple on your window-frame; you have to keep quiet when a decibel-level reading is being taken nearby; you do not address yourself to the normally approachable managing director of Bristol Aircraft when he is preoccupied with fuel-management calculations; and you do not loiter about the flight deck when it is crowded with pilots, navigators and engineers. (At one period during the outward flight there were 11 people in the cockpit.)

Upon this map, which shows very roughly the sort of transcontinental domestic services which C.P.A.L. hope to operate, depends the possibility of further orders for British transport aircraft (see text). C.P.A.L.'s present domestic routes, which currently account for only about a fifth of their total business, are confined to Convair-operated local services in the north-west. T.C.A. have had the monopoly of Canada's main domestic routes for more than 20 years.

Such a flight presents boundless opportunities for learning and observing. I was keenest to learn about the implications for C.P.A.L. of introducing the Britannia, and to gather the opinions of that respected airline on the wider issues of the air transport business. But one cannot be aboard a Britannia for two non-stop journeys of about 14 hours each without realizing that the advertised claims for this airliner ("fastest, longest-range," etc.) are the simple truth.

You can get as emotional as you like about a brochure, but you cannot climb aboard one in Vancouver with 36 others and be sitting in your office in London 15 hours later. To have done just that, or to have flown non-stop from New York to Tel-Aviv in an El Al Britannia, is to have crossed the deceptively wide gap which separates promises from fulfilment. Perhaps, at one time, Bristol did not appreciate how wide that gap was, or how daunting and perverse the troubles *en route* could be. But they do now; and they can show you in production a turbine airliner which works, which they guarantee will fly for 16 hours with an 18,000 lb payload at an average speed of 350 m.p.h., and which you can see, hear, touch and smell. Sales-talk, perhaps; but it needs saying now and again in a world which seems prone to intoxication by the sniff of pigskin brochure-bindings.

Canadian Pacific decided to buy Britannias on October 20, 1955, four and a half months after the inauguration of their trans-Arctic DC-6B service between Vancouver and Amsterdam, and one week after PanAm's order for 707s and DC-8s—the historic order which started the big-jet snowball rolling.

C.P.A.L. were the pioneers of the over-the-top (not quite transpolar) service, and they were going to make a big success of it. The choice of equipment, and its timing, was vital. We quote from a C.P.A.L. equipment study published when the Britannia order was placed:—

"The only aircraft offered early in 1955 for delivery early in 1957 were the piston-driven DC-7C and Lockheed's 1649A, and the Bristol Britannia turboprop 310. The Comet 4 was also considered, but later eliminated because delivery time was the critical factor."

In other words, it was a three-cornered fight between two new

