

FLIGHT

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Cost Control

IT would be "premature," says the Minister of Aviation, to reveal the cost of the TSR.2's electronics. When, we wonder, will the time be ripe? When the costs have grown so much that they can no longer be concealed, a public scandal is precipitated, and the project comes to a halt?

At the same time comes news that the Ministry has completed its inquiry into the culpability of officials in the Ferranti cost affair. The report is being studied by the Minister's permanent secretary, Sir Richard Way, who will decide whether anyone should be reprimanded or dismissed.

Past failures in British aviation will not be avenged in this way, nor future failures avoided.

Government and industry in partnership should regularly publish estimates of defence and civil expenditure, project by project. The plea of security cannot be entered. The Americans do it, they have always done it, and the free world is still free. The Canadians do it, and so do the Australians. Even the French, who some may think are more tolerant of autocracy than the British, will say how many francs they have budgeted for, say, the Mirage in 1970.

It would be more positive and progressive of the SBAC to form a cost control council than to set up—as it has done—a committee to put a flea in the ear of Mr Richard Worcester, the protagonist of US aviation, whose reports have been studied by the Labour Government. Britain has been responsible for some of the greatest innovations in world aviation, and her aircraft industry possesses some of the best people in the country. It is up to them, in partnership with the Government, to open the books. It will be far less painful than the ultimate reckoning.

BEA and BOAC

BIG efforts are being made by BEA's management to improve efficiency. The challenge now is to convince staff, who only six months ago were being told that BEA's £3m profit was proof of efficiency, that wage demands can only be met out of dramatic improvements in productivity and cost level.

All the signs point to a reversal of the image of BEA as the profit-maker and BOAC as the loss-maker. There is perhaps no need to wish BOAC a prosperous New Year; their enviable difficulty now will be to keep net annual profits below £10m in the years ahead. But we sincerely wish prosperity to BEA, who have a fine record to live up to.

The 1965 "Flight"

WITH this first issue of 1965 we introduce two new regular columns and make four alterations to existing regular features.

On the second World News page Sensor will anticipate the changes that are in the air. On the third World News page another new regular column will be about the Press. The aviation business is as sensitive to the Press as it is to anything, and what is written and broadcast is of concern to everyone.

There are four changes to the familiar regular features. Service Aviation is expanded and renamed Defence. Missiles go to Defence, and Spaceflight now has a place in its own right. Air Commerce becomes Air Transport, this being the professional term which more sensibly embraces all the subjects—including operations and engineering—we normally cover. Lastly, Straight and Level goes to the last page of each issue. Our worthy columnist Roger Bacon is not quite sure whether this is promotion or otherwise, but he consoles his ego with the thought that Straight and Level will be more readily found in this position.