

Letters

BOAC and the Independents

SIR,—For the past month or so the ATLB has been receiving applications from the independent airlines to operate on many of BOAC's routes, in particular those over the North Atlantic. As articles and letters in *Flight* have shown, the arguments of those who advocate the breaking of the State-owned airline's monopoly carry considerable weight. No doubt BOAC will, in due course, present its familiar and equally well reasoned case for the continued exclusion of the private sector from its preserve. In the heat of battle, however, one vital factor, now highlighted by the BOAC pilots' work-to-rule, may be overlooked.

This work-to-rule has already caused delays which will inevitably result in at least a few passengers deciding not to fly by BOAC. Moreover, judging by the intransigent attitudes adopted by both sides in the dispute, an eventual stoppage would now seem more than likely. If that were to happen, then with one blow Britain's sole representative in the international long-haul market would be hamstrung. This in itself would be serious enough—but, far worse, and because of the total absence of any form of direct British competition, all the revenue lost would pass to overseas carriers.

We cannot any longer afford to let precious foreign currency slip through our fingers in this way. It is for this reason, if for no other, that increased participation by the independents in Britain's world-wide scheduled services should be welcomed. Only then, even allowing for concerted action by all British pilots, would there be some chance that the contribution made by the airlines towards the balance of payments would not suffer from the eternal squabbles that wrack all branches of industry. Such a step might at the same time undermine the position of strength from which the BOAC aircrew sally forth with their extravagant demands.

London SW7

GUY GREENHOUS

New Angle on 1935-40

SIR,—Being too young to have taken part in the Second World War except as a target, my knowledge of it is mainly based on histories, biographies and so forth. In the light of a more adult understanding of how Britain works, I am bound to say that these accounts seem hideously corrupt. Taking, just as an example, the re-equipment of the RAF in the years 1935-40, I would suggest that a far more accurate version would read as follows:—

"The air industry proposed building multi-gun, mainly metal-skinned monoplane fighters; the Government, after a time, agreed that this might be a good idea, but obviously it could only be done in co-operation with a Continental country willing to share the R&D and initial production costs. Negotiations with Germany were lengthy and ended only when it appeared that they were building their own version, later known as the Messerschmitt Bf109, using a Rolls-Royce engine in the prototype. Equally lengthy discussions were held with the French Government, but it finally transpired that they were offering no more than a 50/50 cost-sharing scheme in the development of their Morane monoplane fighter. Since no amount of retrospective retrograding of Air Ministry specifications could make this aircraft fit RAF requirements, attempts were soon after made to buy American Curtiss Hawks. It was then discovered that all those available for export were committed to the French, to supplement the deficient Moranes. Two British designs, allotted the names Hurricane and Spitfire, and

which air historians believe would have proved moderately successful, gathered dust on the design office shelves.

"In the meantime, certain scientists claimed to have discovered a means of detecting aircraft beyond visual range and in darkness or bad weather. Clearly a project of such magnitude could not be undertaken without the co-operation of the largest electrical industry in the world, which was in America. Discussions with the relevant firms lasted some years; it ultimately became apparent that the USA, protected by sheer distance from any likely aerial attack, thought such devices useless. The project was, of course, then abandoned.

"The three-day Battle of Britain in late July 1940 was fought gallantly by the Gladiators and Furies of Fighter Command, aided nobly by the binoculars of the Royal Observer Corps."

London NW3

GAVIN LYALL

Airport Capacity . . .

SIR,—The summary of the discussions at the IATA Lucerne conference (*Flight*, October 19) was very interesting; but I feel I must put right the calculations of Mr R. E. G. Davies, who vastly overstates the problem of the increased number of passengers using Heathrow in the future. He takes the reasonable figure of 50 million passengers per year using the airport and says this means 100 Jumbo jets an hour. Here are my calculations:—

50 million passengers a year means 1 million a week, i.e.:—

$$\frac{1 \text{ million}}{168} \text{ passengers an hour} = 6,000$$

This means 3,000 passengers an hour arriving and a further 3,000 departing.

The Boeing 747 carries 490 passengers maximum; if we assume a 60 per cent load factor we have 300 passengers per aircraft. This means ten Jumbo jets an hour on average throughout the year, or 20 Jumbo jet movements per hour.

I would have thought that the airports were awaiting the arrival of the Jumbo jet with delight, because it is surely the best way of increasing the passenger turnover without increasing the movements rate and apron congestion.

I maintain that in the future the airports' major problem will be to increase the capacity of their passenger handling, and not to worry too much about aircraft parking space and air traffic control congestion.

Maidenhead, Berks

A. G. HEAPE

[Invited to comment, Mr Davies writes: "I had a feeling someone might check on my figures. The *Flight* report, of course, was essentially a condensed summary of all that was said at the conference, and direct reference was not made to the fact that the discussion was largely about peak problems. My arithmetic, based on recent London Airport statistics, was as follows:—

"Of the estimated 50,000,000 passengers per year, 12½ per cent, or 6,250,000, would fly in the peak month. Assuming that these were spread equally, this would be 200,000 per day, or 24,000 in the peak hour (12 per cent of London's daily flow). I assumed a 60 per cent load factor on 400 mixed-class seats, so the 100 Jumbo jets per hour quoted was no overstatement, especially as I did not even allow for the minor peak days within the week.

"A shattering thought is that all the aircraft will not be 400-seaters. Many will be smaller, thus demanding even higher peak-hour movement rates. Using Mr Heape's assumptions, I wonder what the Noise Abatement Society have to say about the prospect of 20 Jumbo jet movements per hour, every night of the week, throughout the year?"

. . . and Access

SIR,—Mr E. J. G. Wayman appears to have drawn two wrong conclusions in his letter (November 2) at least as far as Leeds/Bradford and Manchester are concerned: (1) Local commuting: city centre to city centre—Leeds, Bradford or Harrogate to Manchester—would not produce any worthwhile time-saving when set against the disadvantage of having one's own transport at one air-