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AI R TRANSPORT.

G-ATMI, the Court Line HS.748, at Prestwick last month en route for the Leeward Islands, where it will be on lease for the third time to Leeward Islands Air Transport. Court Line has now bought a stake in the West Indian airline

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public demand and matching their services to it, or that they should be asked to act against their commercial judge-ment. It is however envisaged that the CAA, in addition to the airlines, should be required to play a positive role and should itself try to establish what services users want, so that it can perform an initiating function at the centre of British aviation, where leadership and innovation have been so conspicuously lacking in the past.
It is therefore hoped that the CAA would be required to have continuing consultations with users of both cargo and passenger services and with the airlines. In this way, the CAA would be in a position to direct airlines' attention to areas where services were inadequate, and licence applica-tions could be considered, not in isolation as hitherto, but in the context of the whole network of existing services and their relationship to user demand.
A case could be made for a statutory consultative body representing users, but it might be more appropriate for the CAA to consult representative bodies, such as the ABCC, about demand for air services. Chambers of Com-merce broadly represent industry and commerce and a significant proportion of air-transport users in all areas of the country; organised on a regional basis, and affiliated to the central association in London, means are available for rapidly sounding out user opinion on a national, regional and local basis.
The proposed guidance includes a number of precepts for the CAA to follow with regard to licensing; but here again they are so general as to verge on the platitudinous and do not face fundamental issues. The association believes that the air transport industry is suffering its biggest-ever crisis in part at least because the public is no longer prepared to accept artificially high prices and an unnecessary and unreal distinction between scheduled and charter services.

It is therefore suggested that the CAA be asked to undertake a fundamental re-examination of existing licensing arrangements, and of the distinction between scheduled and non-scheduled services, so as to create a very much simpler and more credible air-fare and cargo-tariff structure with the minimum of restrictions. The international aspects would of course also have to be considered.

It would be most desirable in any case for the CAA to
be consulted on all international negotiations over UK traffic rights, and to have powers over clearances for foreign operators wishing to land in Britain.
The Act requires the CAA to pay its way and it is pro-posed that the guidance will stipulate that it should become self-supporting not later than 1977-78. This requirement will inevitably result in substantial increases in charges which will ultimately have to be met by users. We suggest that the guidance should require the CAA to phase the

imposition and increase of charges gradually over the six-year period, with the maximum possible prior notice and consultation, as is appropriate in a monopoly situation. The association has consistently pointed to the need for a national airports plan and policy; since airports and air services are necessarily interdependent, both should be considered jointly by the .CAA in the light of existing and potential demand. It is widely recognised that the unco-ordinated and haphazard provision of airports has resulted in wasted resources, unnecessary duplication and plain bad siting in a significant number of cases; this in turn has resulted in a distorted pattern of air services related to these airports.
Not only should there be an airports policy and plan
to relate airports to each other, but the plan itself should be related to the provision of surface transport services, regional planning and environmental considerations. The importance to regional development of fostering provincial air services should also be underlined.
In short, the association believes that there is an un-answerable case for the positive planning and co-ordination of airports by the CAA on a national basis in consultation with owners, users and airlines, and the CAA should be consulted when surface transport and regional develop-ment policy is considered. The vague responsibilities of the CAA for aerodromes under Section 33(2) of the Act need to be backed up by a specific requirement in the guidance that it must play an active and positive role in this field.

MOR E VISCOUNT S FO R BM A

A PACKAGE deal for the acquisition of South African Airways' fleet of seven Viscounts 800s is understood to be in final stages of negotiation by British Midland Airways. SAA plans to withdraw all its Viscount services by February, replacing the type with 737s or 727s on routes to Rhodesia and South-West Africa.

LAKE R DISCLOSUR E SOUGH T
THE US Civil Aeronautics Board has ordered Laker Airways to submit complete documentation on all its charters to the USA during the past six months by January
27. The documentation will be scrutinised by the CAB's Bureau of Enforcement. The board said that the airline had not responded to repeated requests for information. The CAB was "concerned over Laker's indifference," a spokesman said.
This is the first time the CAB has invoked its powers to require submission of information against a foreign airline in connection with enforcement.