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US grass still greener
"THE USA is still in the Garden of
Eden compared with the UK," said
American AO'PA vice-president Max
Karant at the UK Aircraft Owners
and Pilots Association's symposium
for private pilots on December 13. Karant was giving the keynote address to a gathering of over 100 at the Hamilton Place headquarters of the Royal Aeronautical Society in London. Looking ahead to the 1980s, his first instinct was that there would probably be little general aviation left by the end of the next decade. "But," he continued, "I have thought this sort of thing before, and somehow it always seems to survive."
In Karant's comparison of the British and American scenes, the British Airports Authority's attitude to general aviation and airport capacity came in for some hefty knocks. Compared with America, the utilisation of UK runways "is barely enough to keep the weeds from grow-ing." The busiest airport in the USA has over twice the hourly movement

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rate of London Heathrow, he said, and another handles over twice the Heathrow traffic but with half the ground area. There are some 13,000 civil airfields in the USA, of which the airlines use a mere four per cent— and all airports are open to civil air-craft by law. In comparison, the UK "doesn't even come close to saturation of runway capacity." Air traffic con-trol at small airfields in the USA is now a very expensive service to install but "you seem in the UK to have a control tower installed wherever there are a couple of deer roaming." To illustrate his view of near-saturation he played a cassette recording of the controller at this year's Oshkosh con-vention.

But, in keeping with the usual American claim to have more of everything than anyone else, "we have more bureaucrats than anyone— one in 43 Americans is on the govern-ment payroll." Karant pointed out that little escapes the attention of the FAA—"fifty per cent of whose work is of no benefit to general aviation" —so that "every fatal crash is fully certificated."

Although sport and homebuilt fly-ing is still thriving, Karant noted a quiet evolution in new-aircraft sales towards the very well equipped

machine for serious business use. The general-aviation buy now averages out at $100,000 per aircraft, and even a typical well equipped single is running at $80,000. "This is the way general aviation is going in the USA." The efforts of the British Civil Aviation Standing Conference to monitor the work and finances of the CAA were reviewed by BCASC chair-man Rex Smith.
Part of the BCASC's work is to deal with specific complaints about CAA overcharging or other "raw deals," but such claims have to be sub-stantiated by evidence and sent via the appropriate representative organi-sation. He appealed for such com-plaints from the private pilot/owner sector to be sent to Simon Ames at AOPA.

AOPA honorary solicitor Peter Martin closed the morning session with a look at legal matters. The hoary question of PPL cost-sharing was raised; he admitted this was still rather a grey area, but could see little reason why aircraft running costs should not be shared, provided the pilot made no gain which could suggest hire or reward. For club pur-poses correct paperwork on the ground is essential to prove mem-bership. He felt that the CAA's main concern in the matter was to stamp out "cowboy" charter opera-tions, such as go on in France. Martin recommended minimum passenger liability of £75,000 per seat, and pre-ferably £100,000, with any limitation on liability to be by written contract. He summed up by urging all private

Th e photographer

and the Gipsy

The pictures of G-ATBL in the Gipsy Moth article in our December 25 issue came from the camera of ace Flight lensman Tom Hamill. Copies
of these and many other Moth photographs are available from the Flight picture library, telephone 01-261 8397.

pilots to have an up-to-date knowledge of air law as it affected all aspects of their flying. The costs of legal defences, let alone the financial penal-ties of prosecutions, make it well worthwhile "to be wise before the event, not after."
The afternoon session was opened by what must be one of the finest short flying films. Ballet in the Blue starred Art Scholl and his Super Chip-munk, and was filmed during aero-batics by cameras mounted on the fin, wingtip and cockpit floor. Com-plex flick manoeuvres, filmed in slow motion with coloured smoke trails, looked like a new art form. The romantics took a few moments to

come down to earth for a session on tax liabilities and other financial aspects of aircraft ownership, given by John Holland, a chartered account-ant and chairman of the Sherwood Flying Club, Nottingham.
A presentation on European air rallies was opened by Maurice Sey-mour who is well qualified to present

Lionel "Ash" Ashburner is presented with the 1976 John Player Award for Achievement in General Aviation by Geoffrey Kent, chairman of John Player and Sons

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a pilot's viewpoint since he flew to no fewer than 14 rallies in 1976. The first World International Rally Cham-pionship was staged in 1976, and international interest has already been shown in holding the 1978 finals in the UK.
Patrick Nolan of AOPA Ireland looked at rallies from the organiser's viewpoint. Lack of communication and advance publicity hinder both organisers and competitors. He sug-gested some sort of European "clear-ing house"—British AOPA, possibly— to handle all rally bookings.
The flying-training contribution for the day was given by Ron Campbell, chairman of AOPA's Instructor Com-mittee, whose working party has pro-posed major revisions to the UK's IMC Rating.
A major discouragement to the present IMC rating is the require-ment for at least lOOhr experience. The proposed changes are aimed at instituting a two-tier system consisting firstly of a basic IMC rating, com-parable with the present one, which could be gained shortly after the completion of PPL training. This would be followed by an advanced rating involving training and tests in the use of radio navaids. The un-rated PPL and two ratings would each bestow new privileges and introduce specific landing minima. Details of the proposals will hava to be finalised and agreed by AOPA committees before they can be presented to the