

FLIGHT

&
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

In a long speech delivered at Manchester before the holidays, Lord Weir made many interesting and withal reassuring statements with regard to the future of commercial aviation. We regret exceedingly that owing to the incidence of the Christmas holidays, and the consequent necessity of going to press early with last week's issue of "FLIGHT," it was impossible for us to reproduce or to comment on the speech. However, it was so important that we feel it is very much a case of better late than never, though we feel that an apology is due to our readers for our seeming lack of enterprise. Describing himself as an enthusiastic optimist, he nevertheless warned his audience, and through them the whole of the country, that at this highly critical period of the history of the new transport nothing but harm can come from not facing the facts, while the future might be gravely prejudiced by impatience for showy results. The success of the operational side of aerial transport, he pointed out, will depend upon measures which cannot be carried out in five minutes. These measures must be: The development of navigational instruc-

tion by really sound and severe training; the creation of an energetic meteorological service, specially designed to help air transport; the adoption of improved systems of wireless telegraphy and telephony, and the adoption of a first-class system of day and night marking of landing places and aerodromes. If these measures are taken, then he was quite clear that in five years' time there will be no more difficulty in navigating an aeroplane over a long course in foggy or otherwise bad weather than there is now in navigating a ship. If these measures are not taken, if hard and continuous experimental study is not put into the problems yet unsolved, then trouble, delay and discouragement will certainly ensue.

It is just as well that these remarks of the Air Minister should be taken well to heart. "FLIGHT" has invariably pointed out that great as the possibilities of the future undoubtedly are, we must have patience—even infinite patience—if we are to reap the full fruits of the enterprise of the past and that which must be put into the future if we are to reach the full limit of progress which sane, sound policy can scarcely help achieving. We are glad, even thankful, that Lord Weir in the midst of his optimism has thought well to utter the very warning we ourselves have uttered more than once.

On the other hand, we have those within the movement who profess to see no particular future for commercial aviation within the British Isles, at any rate. At the other extreme, there are those who appear to think that all that remains now is that the restrictions on flying should be at once removed in order that we should be able to go straight ahead. As is always the case when such matters of high import are the subject of discussion, the truth lies midway between the two extremes of opinion. Undoubtedly, there is an enormous future before the movement, but we shall have to "gang warily" if that future is to be consummated to the full. Lord Weir is most certainly right when he says that nothing but grave prejudice to the future can result from impatience for showy results. As to the measures suggested to be adopted in advance of real development, it is unquestionable that the Minister is on thoroughly sound ground in his recommendations. Aerial navigation, in spite of all the War has taught us, is still an infant science, and we are still to some extent seeking for the sound methods which must be evolved before we can expect to make the navigation of the