

diately applicable in a slightly modified form to airship work. The use of heavy oil and economy in working are two of its main advantages. Against that must be placed the question of the weight of the engine itself. In the Diesel engine, as applied to work on the ground, the weight is high, but competent engineers are convinced that the weight can be reduced to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 7 lbs./h.p., which is certainly not a prohibitive figure considering the many advantages which the type possesses.

Imperial Airship Routes

The loss of "R.38" has in no way damped the enthusiasm of Mr. Hughes, the Australian Premier, for the ideal of a rapid service of communications between the various parts of the Empire by means of airships. He has lost no time since his return to Melbourne in laying before the Commonwealth Parliament his ideas and proposals for the opening up of airship services between England and Australia. He submitted a proposal, upon the lines suggested in FLIGHT on August 25 last, for an experimental system for two years, to cost £250,000. This would be possible, he said, by utilising four airships from England, with mooring masts at Cairo, Poona or Karachi, Singapore and Australia. The scheme would be experimental, with a view to demonstrating the practicability of air communications over long distances. He asked the House not to regard the disaster to "R.38" as discrediting air communications. Terrible as that disaster had been, it had revealed things that should be known for the sake of future security of aerial services.

To guarantee a fortnightly service, said the Premier, ten or twelve airships would be required, and it would be better to test the service by initial experiment on a comparatively small scale. He believed it would be possible to cover the distance between England and Australia in from eight to ten days, though experts were doubtful about the former time.

Mr. Hughes' declaration has been warmly welcomed here by all who believe in the possibilities of the airship as a means of speeding up intercommunication between the integral parts of the Empire. These have lately been living in the gloom of despair at ever getting anything done, and the encouragement extended by Mr. Hughes' statement was as badly needed as it was welcome. At the time of writing we are not aware of the reception of the outline proposal by the Commonwealth Parliament, so it is early yet to regard the experimental services as coming near to accomplished facts.

We do not want to throw any cold douches on the hopes of those who look forward to the establishment of the suggested services, but we must point out that £250,000 spread over two years is a very small sum to play with when things are as they are. A year ago, when we had an airship fleet in being, it was different, and there would have been no particular difficulty in commissioning the necessary four ships at a comparatively small outlay. But even supposing everything to go smoothly with the initial part of the scheme and the money to be voted, where are we to find the ships now? We certainly have four ships, but they are very much on paper. "R.36" and "R.33" are not in the best of condition for commissioning, and the two surrendered Zeppelins are utterly useless until

they have been provided with new gasbags and have undergone a lengthy and expensive process of re-conditioning. However, we will not preach pessimism.

The point now is that a concrete move has at last been made towards instituting an Empire airship service. We have never expected the States concerned to find all the money for such services, so we regard the first suggested outlay as by way of being encouragement to private enterprise to come forward and set things going. We begin at last to think that we shall yet live to see regular airship services running all over the Empire.

The Next War

Gen. Brancker seems to have suffered at the hands of the reporters, who made him say in the course of a recent lecture that "in five years' time instinct tells me there will be another war. There will be no declaration. It will start by a sudden aerial attack." What he actually did say was that war might come on us again, possibly even in five years' time. He explains that he mentioned the period of five years instinctively, as being the least possible time in which we might have to face war.

It really matters very little which way the matter was put. In either case we think Gen. Brancker has given people something to think about, since he is unquestionably right in his prognostication of how the next great war will begin—if it begins at all. That is to say, if the League of Nations and the Washington Disarmament Conference do not succeed in the meantime in discovering some less crude method of settling international disputes than the appeal to arms.

For ourselves, we are frankly sceptical of anything of the kind. So long as human nature remains what it is and so long as the world is divided into nations, so long will there be wars and rumours of wars. And the best manner of inviting war is to be unprepared to resist aggression. This last may be accepted as an elementary proposition, and if we so accept it, the next we have to do is to enquire whether we are in such a state of preparedness as to be able to resist attack if it should come, or, better still, if we are so armed at all points that the potential enemy will be deterred from making an aggressive move.

Gen. Brancker says—as a great many have said before—that there will be no declaration of war. The first that will be known of war will be when the great aerial attack develops. This, we agree, is beyond question. Are we, then, laying our plans in such a manner as to deter the possible aggressor? The answer, unfortunately, is most distinctly in the negative. We are not. While other nations are encouraging civil aviation and building up a powerful reserve to their fighting air services, we have reduced our Air Force to a mere nucleus and have practically no reserve whatever. Nor are there any indications that the Government appreciates the position of hopeless inferiority into which we are falling.

Once again we see the safety of the Empire being imperilled by a set of jerrymandering politicians, who seem to be able to find the money for all and every vote-catching scheme, but when they are asked to provide for the elementary needs of Imperial defence allege that there is no money in the till and in any case there will never be another great war!