

# CIVIL AVIATION IN 1921

## Half-Yearly Report of C.G.C.A.

[THE half-yearly report on the progress of Civil Aviation during the period April-September, 1921, was issued as a White Paper (Command No. 1559) on December 23. As usual it is signed by Sir Frederick Sykes, Controller-General of Civil Aviation, and contains statistics and other interesting data relating to the progress made all over the world during the period under review (April 1 to September 30, 1921). The report, which is obtainable from H.M. Stationery Office, Imperial House, Kingsway, London, W.C. 2, price 3s. net, is far too lengthy to publish in full, and we therefore propose to deal with only such portions of it as can be usefully reviewed and summarised. We thoroughly recommend all who are interested in aviation in any of its branches and applications to obtain a copy, and thus to be able to follow in detail the subjects and statements to which only the briefest reference can be made here.—ED.]

The fifth half-yearly report on the progress of Civil Aviation at home and abroad follows the lines of previous reports. Part I includes information regarding civil aviation in Great Britain and the Empire, and Part II its progress in foreign countries. In dealing with the question of relations with foreign countries, the report states that ratifications of the International Air Convention have been prepared by the British Empire, France, Japan, Belgium, the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom, Greece, Portugal and Siam. Under Article 34 of the Convention ratification by a majority of the 26 signatory States (the British Empire counting for this purpose as six) is required before the International Commission for Air Navigation can be constituted. The ratification of only one more State is required before this can be done. The periodical Conferences between the Department of Civil Aviation and the French and Belgian Air authorities have been continued with, it is stated, satisfactory results.

The regulations adopted in 1919, which were based upon the principle that the owner of an aircraft should be responsible for the safety of the machine (the system of supervision by licensed ground engineers), are considered to have proved satisfactory. It is of interest to find it stated that negotiations are in progress with a view to establishing somewhat similar procedure in the case of foreign aircraft operating to and from England. Other countries have not as yet paid the same attention to the subject of maintenance.

Attention is called in the report to certain progressive improvements at Croydon, notably with regard to medical examination of alien passengers, and to the installation of bulk petrol storage and the establishment of a sub-post office.

In the matter of communications (Signals and navigation) progress has been made with direction-finding wireless, and it is stated that now that both Pulham and Croydon have been provided with stations working in conjunction, it is possible for aircraft to "fix" their position by bearings obtained simultaneously from the two stations. The radio-telephonic service with aircraft has been further developed. All British machines employed on the cross-Channel services carry telephones, and as soon as the ratification of the International Air Convention has been deposited, regulations will be issued which will make it compulsory for aircraft carrying ten or more passengers to be equipped with wireless.

Largely as a result of the experimental flights of "R.33," arrangements are now in course of completion whereby the Croydon-Lympne route could at short notice be opened for night flying.

Progress has been made in the compilation of data regarding aviation facilities in foreign countries, and records have been prepared showing existing facilities in a number of European countries. A gazetteer of the facilities in the British Isles is nearing completion.

### Commercial Air Services

Apart from the statistics contained in tables at the end of the report, reference is made to the operation of the London-Paris air services under the temporary subsidy scheme entered into with the Handley Page and Instone companies. The services have been in operation throughout the summer of 1921 with, the report states, satisfactory results. It is pointed out that few machines of an improved economical commercial type were available, and that the temporary nature of the arrangement rendered it financially impracticable to provide large numbers of machines. In spite of these handicaps, there was a considerable increase in the average load carried per flight.

Reference is then made to the proposed "permanent" scheme of subsidy on a 25 per cent. basis and including the hire-purchase scheme by which firms are able to acquire machines of "approved" type at less than cost price. The report states, however, that by August 1, the date on which the scheme was to come into force, the experience gained during the summer had shown that the scheme as originally proposed was not likely to provide adequate assistance, and it was therefore amplified as follows: "An additional grant of £3 per passenger and 3d. per lb. of freight will be made to approved firms during the year ending February 28, 1923, while in addition a contribution towards the insurance of machines provided by the Air Ministry under the hire-purchase system will be made in the form of 50 per cent. of the premiums up to a maximum of 10 per cent. of the value of the machines. This scheme, it is hoped, will become operative in March, 1922; meanwhile, special arrangements, similar to those now obtaining, are being continued for the operation of the London-Paris service during the winter months 1921-22."

The report states that, as it is considered that it would not be desirable to have unlimited competition, the number of firms has, for the time being, been limited to four. Of these, the Handley Page, the Instone and the Daimler Hire have been chosen to operate the London-Paris route, while one firm only, the Aerial Route Syndicate, Ltd., has been selected to run a London-Brussels service. It is stated that the Air Council do not contemplate approving more than three firms at any one time on the London-Paris route, although reserving the right to approve other firms should circumstances warrant it.

Some interesting information relating to developments in meteorology is given in the report, but we would refer those interested in this important branch to obtain the White Paper so as to derive the advantage of the complete report.

As regards licences and certificates, it is of interest to quote a few figures. During the period under review, 118 pilots' licences were renewed, 122 ground engineers, 104 certificates of registration of heavier-than-air machines and 4 lighter than air, and 45 airworthiness certificates for heavier-than-air craft. The corresponding numbers of new licences and certificates were as follows:—Pilots, 52; ground engineers, 38; heavier-than-air craft, 76; lighter-than-air craft, 2. Airworthiness certificates for heavier-than-air craft, 57.

It is interesting to note that a special certificate of airworthiness for racing machines has been approved, as such machines would be severely handicapped by having to conform to the rules applying to commercial machines.

*Collection, Collation and Issue of Information.*—With regard to the well-known "Notices to Airmen" (which are published in FLIGHT regularly), it is proposed in the future to make a slight modification in the manner of issue. Although numbered consecutively in the order of issue, they will appear under two heads—(a) Navigational and (b) General. In addition it is intended to issue a *Monthly Air Pilot* containing reprints of the Notices to Airmen, as well as other, and less urgent, information. The issue of an *Annual Air Pilot* is under consideration.

*Airships.*—On this delicate subject the report contains a brief statement of the facts which led to the suspension of all airship activity and the reduction of the personnel to care and maintenance parties. Reference is also made to various experiments made with airships during the period under review, notably experiments with mooring.

Regarding the progress of civil aviation in the Dominions, Colonies and foreign countries, the report contains some very interesting and valuable information, but we have not the space to refer to it at length here. Some of the numerous tables of data and statistics contained in the report and its appendices are, however, of interest.

For instance, the number of arrivals and departures of aircraft from and to the Continent between April and September, according to nationality, were as follows: British, 671; French, 1,058; Belgian, 339; Dutch, 292. The number of passengers carried on the same routes during the same period by machines of the different nationalities were: British, 4,006; French, 3,499; Belgian, 597; and Dutch, 420.

The total value of the imports (free and dutiable) by air from April to September was £206,357, and that of the exports was £110,400. The estimated number of outgoing letters posted for transmission by air was 42,840, and the