

IN PARLIAMENT

Commercial Aviation Subsidies

MR. GILBERT, on March 30, asked the Secretary of State for Air whether his Department pay or allow any subsidies to any commercial aviation companies; if so, will he state to how many of such companies they are paid, what the amounts are, and if any and what conditions are imposed as a condition of payment; if any time limit is imposed; and, if so, for how long?

Captain Guest: As the answer is rather long, I will, with my hon. friend's permission, circulate it in the *Official Report*.

The following is the answer:

The answer to the first two parts of the question is as follows:—

Two companies are at present subsidised on the London-Paris route. The amount and conditions of this subsidy are set forth in Command Paper 1521, published in October last. The terms and agreements therein set forth have been extended to 31st March.

From the 1st April three companies will be subsidised on this route under new conditions. Briefly summarised, these conditions are as follows:—

- (1) A subsidy of 25 per cent. on gross takings.
- (2) Provision of not more than half the operating fleet by the Air Ministry on a hire purchase basis.
- (3) An additional grant during the period ending 28th February, 1923, of £3 per passenger and 3d. per lb. of goods carried.
- (4) A reduction in the subsidy by the amount of any profit over 15 per cent.
- (5) In order to qualify for the subsidy, the firm, its personnel and aircraft, must be British, a specified regularity of service must be maintained, and fully detailed accounts must be kept for the information of the Air Ministry.

In regard to the third and fourth parts of this question, the arrangements in respect of the 25 per cent. subsidy and the provision of machines on the hire purchase basis hold good until 31st March, 1924. The provision of any additional grant under paragraph (3) above after 28th February, 1923, will be a matter for consideration prior to that date. I would add that tenders are now under consideration for the operation of the London-Brussels route by one company with the assistance of a subsidy.

Army and Air Force (Annual) Bill

WHEN considered in Committee, on April 5, Major-Gen. Seely said he desired to raise a point which had been raised previously. That was, the great inconvenience of having the Army Act and the Air Force Act combined in one Bill. It would be very much better, for every reason, if they had separate Bills. There was no special relation between the Army and the Air Force, which does not exist as between the Air Force and the Royal Navy. In all sorts of ways, the terms of service of the Air Force were wholly different from the terms of service of the Army, and they were not differences in a small degree but differences in kind. All this had to be explained in various Clauses.

In the case of the Air Force, a point of really high principle was involved. It was not only inconvenient, but a matter of high policy, not to confuse the Army and the Air Force. Each should have its own separate Annual Act. He asked whether an assurance could be given, that in future, two separate Bills would be provided.

Lieut.-Col. J. Ward, who spoke in a completely opposite direction, was followed by Mr. Mosley, who said Lieut.-Col. Ward, having had no connection of any kind with the problems of the air, saw fit to ridicule the suggestion of Maj.-Gen. Seely, who had had a long and intimate connection with the Air Service. Lieut.-Col. Ward did not appear to realise in what the duty of the Air Service consisted, or the kind of discipline that was required. In the Air Service, a man was kept for one of two things, either to fly, or to keep machines and engines in proper repair; he had not to polish buttons or to march about a barrack square. The very nature of his employment was fundamentally different in every respect from the employment of the ordinary military man, and the characteristics required differed widely from the kind of character which was desirable in military service. All that was required of the Air Service mechanic was mechanical proficiency?

granted the ordinary measure of good conduct that was required in civilian life, and obedience to the exigencies of the Service. Military discipline was quite unsuitable, and in most respects, quite unnecessary, in regard to the problems of the Air Service. He, himself, having had a slight connection with the Air Service, must agree with Maj.-Gen. Seely.

Lieut.-Col. Ward: Would it not be more sensible to suggest that the Air Force should come under the civil authority and not under the Army?

Mr. Mosley: The Air Force was neither civil nor military. It was not subject to the ordinary requirements of military service. It was a service distinct, and altogether apart, from the Army or the Navy, or civilian life. It was a new arm. Why it should be shackled and tied by military traditions which were entirely unsuited to it, passed his understanding.

Captain Guest said this question had occupied the attention of the Air Ministry since he had been there, during the past year, and there had been considerable discussions as to whether the Service would be assisted by having its own Annual Act. There were many reasons why they should like to have their own Act. It would be a further hall-mark of an independent and separate Service. Last year conditions were such that the Bill was not presented to the House. This year, the pressure of business had, to some extent, interfered with a decision being taken on the matter. He should, however, continue to press for a separate Air Force (Annual) Bill. What decision would be reached by the Cabinet it was not for him to say. Taking it all round, he thought that so much of their Service was common to both Services that it was not a matter which one need press, unduly, in the present state of public opinion, but he hoped that nothing had been said that day which would prevent the Air Ministry from raising this question on another occasion.

Maj.-Gen. Seely said he was glad to hear that the Secretary of State for Air had had this under consideration, and that it was proposed to bring in a separate Air Force Bill.

Question, "That the Clause stand part of the Bill," put, and agreed to.

Battleships and Bomb Attacks

REAR-ADMIRAL SUETER, on April 5, asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty whether he has any information that a 4,000 lbs. bomb has been dropped, quite successfully, from the air in America?

Mr. Amery: According to the American Press, a bomb of 4,300 lbs. carrying about 2,000 lbs. T.N.T., has been dropped on land by an army aeroplane. This is the only instance of which the Admiralty have any information.

Lieut.-Col. Moore-Brabazon: Can we have some experiments on this side, with regard to bomb dropping? Can we have the Hood for 10 minutes, against the Air Force?

Capt. Viscount Curzon: Is there a single aeroplane in any Navy in the world, operating from an aircraft carrier, which is capable of carrying bombs of such a size?

Mr. Amery: I believe not.

Rear-Admiral Sueter asked (1) whether the new designs for the post-Jutland battleships, as contemplated to be built in 1923, can resist a 4,000 lbs. bomb, when dropped from the air, within 30 ft. of the ship if fitted with a delay-action fuse for detonating the explosive charge when at about 20 ft. under water;

(2) whether any experiments have been carried out in this country to determine the effect of the water projectile, thrown up by a 2,000-lb., 3,000-lb., or 4,000-lb. bomb, dropped from the air, to strike the water at various distances from a target representing the under-water portion of a post-Jutland battleship provided with an external bulge or other devices for lessening the explosive effect of a locomotive torpedo or bomb dropped from the air?

Mr. Amery: It is not in the public interest to give information with regard to experiments which have been, and are still being, carried out, but the Admiralty consider that satisfactory protection can be provided in the new ships against the attack suggested in these two questions.

NIGHT FLYING ON LONDON-PARIS ROUTE

THE first flight by night over the British portion of the Continental Air Route (Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, etc.) was carried out on Wednesday night by an Air Ministry machine in order to test the ground organisation which has been established for commercial flying by night between London and the Continental capitals.

The aeroplane, which carried eight people, including a navigator, wireless officer, and the Air Ministry officials responsible for the lighting and wireless arrangements of the route, left Biggin Hill about 8.30 p.m., flew to the London Terminal Aerodrome, Croydon, and landed there. The pilot in charge, who has had great experience, expressed the view that the flood lighting arrangements on the aerodrome by means of dispersed searchlight beams, together with the illuminated landing "Ls," were the best he had seen, and made landing as easy by night as by day.

The aircraft left Croydon Aerodrome about 9.20 p.m., and steered a direct course for Lympne Aerodrome on the coast. Temporary aerial lighthouses were in action at Tatsfield and at Cranbrook, and these were easily picked up. Shortly after passing the Cranbrook light the pilotage light on Lympne

Aerodrome became clearly visible. The machine then flew over Lympne Aerodrome and continued over the Channel towards St. Inglevert, the first aerodrome on the French side. The marine lighthouse at Cap Gris Nez, which had been visible as soon as the aircraft was over Biggin Hill, gave an excellent leading mark, and very soon the French aerial lighthouse on St. Inglevert Aerodrome also came in sight. Turning back on its course, the aeroplane then crossed the coast near Folkestone, and headed direct for the pilotage light at Lympne, at which aerodrome an easy and smooth landing was effected. Leaving this station at about 11.30 p.m., a course was retraced to Croydon, the lights of the Terminal Aerodrome being easily picked out from all the mass of lights of Croydon and London generally. After circling Croydon Aerodrome the aircraft was headed for Biggin Hill, where a landing was effected with the help of wing tip flares and ground flares.

The general impressions of those who made the flight were that it is easier to find a course by night than by day and that provided the Continental ground organisation is as good as our own there should be no difficulty whatever in commercial night flying over the London-Paris route.

The Flight to South America

As recorded in *FLIGHT* last week, the two Portuguese aviators who are attempting to fly from Portugal to South America in a Fairey seaplane, with Rolls-Royce "Eagle" engine, left Portugal and arrived safely at Las Palmas, Canary Islands, on March 30. They were then reported to have left Las Palmas for St. Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands on Sunday morning, April 2, but no news was to hand when going to press last week. It is now reported that the machine arrived safely at St. Vincent, where the aviators are remaining until a full moon will assist them in the 1,260 miles long stage

from St. Vincent to Fernando Noronha, off the coast of Brazil.

Parcels by Air to Paris

A REDUCED scale of charges is announced by the Postmaster-General for parcels accepted by the Post Office for conveyance by air and delivery in Paris. Under the old scale the charge varied between 1s. 6d. for a 1 lb. parcel and 9s. 9d. for the maximum weight of 11 lb. The new schedule is simplified, and the fees are as follows:—

Up to 2 lbs., 1s. 9d.; up to 5 lbs., 3s.; up to 8 lbs., 3s. 9d.; up to 11 lbs., 4s. 3d.