At present the Air Ministry has not laid down any definite scale of strength for the R.A.F. Reserve, but it is hoped that in two or three years' time the Reserve will consist of some 700 officers and 12,000 men. It may be stated, however, that several hundreds of officers are wanted at once, in the classes indicated above. The cost of the Reserve will naturally depend on its strength, but it is thought that with the system adopted for training and practice the cost will be quite moderate, and at any rate it is not, we understand, expected to exceed £250,000.

The period of enrolment in the R.A.F. Reserve will be three to five years, in the case of Classes A and AA; four years' initial enrolment for Class B; and a minimum of three years and a maximum of five years in Class BB.

Candidates selected for commissions in Class A will be entered in the Reserve when arrangements have been made for them to undergo a re-qualifying course in flying, unless they can prove that recent experience in flying renders such a course unnecessary. Details of this course are not yet settled, but negotiations are proceeding with a view to establish four civilian schools in various parts of the country at which candidates would undergo a course of about one month's duration, or, at any rate, not exceeding two months. All officers will be regarded as on probation until they have passed their re-qualifying course, after which they will be confirmed in their appointments.

Candidates selected for commissions in Class AA will be entered at once as Pilot officers on probation. If satisfactory, they will be confirmed in their appointments when they have completed six months in the Reserve.

We understand that the four civilian schools whose services it is hoped to enlist are the de Haviland Aircraft Co., at Stag Lane; the Bristol Aeroplane Co. at Felton; Armstrong-Siddeley's at Coventry and Beardmore's at Glasgow. The arrangements are, however, not completed yet.

Officers of Classes B and BB will be liable to undergo a technical course lasting two weeks in each year, and to pass a medium standard re-qualifying examination at the end of the course.

On the question of pay, we understand that officers of the Reserve will receive the same pay and allowances as officers of corresponding rank in the R.A.F. Subject to complying with the regulations as to training, etc., officers will be paid annual retainers which in the case of Classes A and AA have been fixed, at £30 per annum, and for Classes B and BB at £20 per annum.

These are, briefly, the lines upon which the R.A.F. Reserve is being built up, and it is gratifying to find that the Air Ministry has now taken practical steps towards ensuring the establishment of a link between the personnel of the R.A.F. and civil life. Not only so, but it is hoped and expected that a great proportion of the officers of the Reserve will be drawn from civil life. This begins to promise effect to that particular function of civil aviation which is not its least valuable asset: that of forming a Reserve to the R.A.F. much as does the Mercantile Marine in the case of the Navy.

The Air Conference

The Third Air Conference is now a thing of the past, and the question naturally arises: What has been accomplished? Personally, we feel that somehow this year's Conference was more promising than previous ones. For one thing, the papers did not give rise to discussions that ought to have been held at the Royal Aeronautical Society. That is something in the way of improvement. For all that, we think Mr. Holt Thomas, as usual, hit the nail on the head when he said that the Air Conference was not meant to be a committee of experts, but was intended to attract business men. In other words, the real object of the Air Conference should be to afford business men an opportunity of finding out what commercial aviation can do for them. Of that, it is to be feared, little has been accomplished, and we may as well frankly admit that this is due, in no small measure, to the fact that we, the aviation community, do not ourselves know what are the possibilities of aviation. Sir Henry White Smith pleaded for facility for firms to do research work, and stated that at the moment we really do not know what is a commercial aeroplane.

Although relatively little attention was given to this subject, it is one which plays an extraordinarily important part in the future development of commercial aviation, and to us it seems that, without exception, members who spoke at the Conference failed to realise this fundamental problem. There is little doubt that with four services in operation this year much will be learned, but we are frankly afraid that the design of commercial aircraft will not benefit greatly.

Owing to the fact that the London-Paris service has been, with the exception of a few months towards the end of last year, the one upon which we concentrated, there has been no visible attempt at finding specialised aircraft. Excellent types have been evolved, but they have been handicapped by the fact that they were so designed as to be capable of accommodating any sort of load. To our way of thinking this is a mistake. It will probably be found that, in order to get maximum efficiency, machines should be specially designed for the work to be done.

Thus, it can be imagined that one type will be intended solely for mails. This type will be fast, as speed is of first importance. It will not, at first, need to be large, and it will have but one occupant—the pilot. It is fairly certain that a pilot, knowing that he has no passengers on board, will get through even in very bad weather conditions. With more encouragement from the G.P.O. the mail aeroplane would have been an accomplished fact.

The second type we have in mind is for passengers only, and will probably be a development of the present type, with increased comfort for the passengers and any safety device that tends towards greatest freedom from mishap.

The third type will be designed for goods and parcels, and designs have already been got out which promise to produce machines affording a maximum of convenience in loading and unloading. This type need not be so fast as the two previous ones, and should be capable of very great economy in carrying much greater useful loads per horse power than the mail 'plane, and considerably greater than the passenger carriers, in which upholstery, heating apparatus, wireless, etc., run away with such a large percentage. If due consideration is given, at next year's Air Conference, to points such as these, we think that better progress will be made. It is, perhaps, too much to hope that machines of these types may be put on the services during the present year so that the experience may be available when next we meet at the Guildhall.