

The decision will doubtless be received with general regret, but our readers may rest assured that it was not reached until the problem had been thoroughly discussed, and that nobody regretted the necessity for refraining from entering machines more than did those directly concerned.

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Lack of Time

In order that the reasons for the decision may be fully appreciated, it will be necessary to refer back, briefly, to the earlier history of the Schneider Cup race. When the trophy was first put up by M. Jacques Schneider, a member of the famous French armament firm of that name, it is fairly safe to say that no such speeds and engine powers as reached by modern machines had been contemplated. The earlier Schneider Cup machines were powered with engines of round about 100 h.p., and the machines themselves were not so expensive to build but that aircraft firms, or even private individuals, could afford to enter. Gradually, however, the engine powers employed grew and grew, until something like 700 h.p. has been reached, with every indication that still higher horse-powers will be called for. This has naturally meant not only a vast increase in the cost of engines, but also an equally large increase in the cost of the machines as a whole, and—what is perhaps even more important—the necessity for a much longer period of preparation, not only in the matter of testing machines, engines, airscrews, floats, etc., thoroughly, but also in the preparation of the pilots, the handling of such high-speed machines requiring special training and a great deal of practising.

It is thus seen that from every point of view the Schneider Cup race has become infinitely more difficult than it was in the earlier days—financially, technically, and as regards the human element. To the credit of the United States it must be said that they were the first to realise that the only way of tackling the Schneider Cup problem with any hope of success was to make of it a national affair. This they proceeded to do, and in 1923, when they challenged Great Britain at Cowes, they sent over machines and crews backed by the financial and best technical resources of the United States Government. As all the world knows, the Americans won a decisive victory at Cowes, but what everyone did not realise was that America had changed the nature of the Schneider Cup race from a more or less private sporting affair to putting it on a national basis. The British Government has been slow to follow suit, but last year a beginning was made, by ordering a few machines and permitting their constructors to enter them in the race. This year still greater support had been promised, but the fact remained that if we were to have any hopes of winning the Schneider Cup very strenuous efforts had to be made, and the time for making them was considered to be too short. As a result the decision not to enter. Under the circumstances we feel that this decision was the only one to which those concerned could have come. To have rushed machines through for the race, only to discover at the last minute some unexpected "snag," which would have prevented them from putting up a creditable performance would scarcely be calculated to increase British prestige abroad, and that being so, it is surely more dignified to be perfectly frank in the matter, and

to state that we regret that we do not feel that we can undertake the construction of machines in time for October.

While on the subject of the Schneider Cup, it may be stated that the Royal Aero Club proposes, at the next meeting of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale in September, to suggest that in the future the Schneider Cup race (if it be still an existing event) be held, not annually, as in the past, but every other year. The suggestion is a very practical one, as the difficulties of building and testing machines for the race have now become such as to require a much longer period of preparation. Whether the suggestion will meet the views of other nations is, of course somewhat problematical.

This brings us to the question that will naturally be asked, *i.e.*, will there be a race this year? The answer to that rests mainly with America. If no country enters machines, America has a perfect right to claim a "walk-over." She has already once forgone that right—a sporting gesture which this country duly appreciated—and if she should decline to declare "no race" this year, small blame could attach to her. In that case the Cup would become the permanent property of the United States, and the question would then arise whether a new cup should be offered, and if so under similar conditions or under totally different ones.

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The Greater Issues

From the fact that it has been decided not to enter machines for this year's Schneider Cup race, it must not be assumed that the development of high-speed machines is to be abandoned. On the contrary, as we have already indicated, Government support for a policy of high-speed development is to be increased, and orders have already been placed by the Air Ministry for several high-speed machines and for new types of engines. These will be completed during the coming summer, and will then be thoroughly tested out, and as a result of the tests further machines will be built, which will be available for the race in 1927, if it be still open. The Air Ministry, now realising the importance of world's records, will not only permit, but will encourage attempts by these machines to establish new world's records, and it is thought that, if successful, the results will be of far greater importance to British aviation than attempting, under the present conditions, to win the Schneider Cup. With which we are cordially in agreement.

This decision is to be welcomed most wholeheartedly, and it is to be hoped that the principle will later be extended to include service machines. It is now several years ago that FLIGHT first pleaded for permission to be given to constructors of service aircraft to let them claim such performances as constituted world's records, performances which certain machines put up as a matter of routine service work. In his paper before the Institution of Aeronautical Engineers, Mr. O. E. Simmonds stated that, with a certain Supermarine flying boat, it would be possible, if permitted, to beat 32 out of the 39 existing world's records, and to put up four new world's records in classes not hitherto successfully attempted. While, therefore, we applaud the decision to go for speed records, we do most certainly ask that constructors be permitted to attempt other records of which certain service machines are capable.