

Bureau, are opening a new branch in South Africa under the management of Captain Douglas Mail. It will be remembered that Captain Mail had the misfortune to crash an Argosy a month back, while taking his "ticket" on a three-engined machine. The machine for the African branch of the company is expected to leave shortly, and will be flown out by Captain Mail.

Imperial Airways have acquired an Avro X, and it is understood that it will be used on the Paris-Zurich section of the London-Zurich service.

On Friday, all the Imperial Airways' pilots did their landings on this machine, but when it was inspected during nightly overhaul, it was found that one of the undercarriage fittings had fractured, so the Avro X is out of service for a short time. Further misfortune befel them on Saturday, when the starboard undercarriage of a Handley-Page W.10 collapsed while taxiing out with a load of joyriders. Luckily, only slight damage was done, and this machine will not be in the hangars very long.

The first Australian Air Mail arrived this week, amid scenes of great rejoicing. Naturally, the Press formed a large section of the crowd, who came to see the arrival.

The Royal Dutch Airlines have commenced their annual strawberry-carrying season, and every evening their

machines are packed to capacity with boxes of this delicious fruit. From Croydon they are sent to various fruit markets, all over the country.

The tarmac is at last beginning to look respectable again, and it is to be hoped that we shall not be subjected to dust storms, as during previous seasons. The only redeeming factor has been the Aerodrome Hotel, and it has been possible to wash the dust down at various times, but, unfortunately, that becomes an expensive pastime. Some think it is better to go farther afield to another well-known local hostelry, where prices are lower!

Two flights of Bristol Bulldogs have passed through here during the week, *en route* for Sweden. These represent part of an order to equip the Swedish Air Force with these machines. Both flights were piloted by Swedish officers, whose uniform is more naval looking than military.

The regular services have been fully maintained, in spite of the weather, and the Aerodrome has had its full share of visits from private owners.

Joyriding has been as popular as could be expected, and, when the weather gets really good, this part of the business should flourish.

The traffic figures for the week were:—Passengers, 912; freight, 59 tons. P. B.

OUR AIRSHIP POLICY

THE Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Commons on May 14 about the future of airship policy. He said that after reading the Simon report on the loss of R101, the position was that airships up to date had neither proved a failure nor achieved an assured success. The cost of the 1924 programme, including the two ships, masts, etc., had been £2,350,000. The United States was pursuing a policy on similar lines to ours. Germany was doing the same. We could do one of three things. We could set up the 1924-30 programme and continue to build new ships and go on; we could scrap everything, or we could take a middle course and reduce our airship equipment to proportions and to an organisation which would, for the time being, be more in the nature of a scientific investigation than of anything beyond that. The Cabinet had decided upon the middle course. There would be no new construction. Cardington would be kept as a nucleus. The overseas bases, for which we were responsible, would be maintained so that they should not fall into disrepair. They hoped that the Ismailia and Karachi bases would be kept, and they had asked the Canadian Government its views about Montreal, but had had no reply. There would be no spectacular flights by R100. No new bay would be inserted in the ship. She would just be put back into flyable condition. She would become an experimental ship. The Aeronautical Research Committee had a very keen interest in carrying on the experiments which it had begun, and which had been carried to a very interesting point. Model experiments required to be tested by something on a much larger scale. There was another consideration. Supposing airships were not going to be a complete failure, and during the next few years we felt that we must go back to some active interest in airships, it would be a tremendous mistake if in the meantime we had been training no men for airship construction. A nucleus in flying training should also be maintained. This plan would cost £120,000 in the first year, £130,000 in the second and £140,000 in the third. It was perfectly true that in these days of financial stringency what could be saved must be saved, but sometimes saving was a form of very short-sighted extravagance.

Sir Samuel Hoare said that he was inclined to agree with the Prime Minister's argument that the right course was a middle course. The Simon report, Sir Samuel Hoare said, did not show that there was anything wrong with airships as such. If the disaster had not taken place and if it had been possible to have had a year's trial with R101, he believed that it would have been possible to reduce some of the almost excessive safety factors and to have got the weight considerably lower than it was at the time of the disaster. With regard to personal pressure to undertake the flight, he said that he should probably have done very much what Lord Thomson did. He recalled that during the five years of preparation almost every member of the House and almost every member of the public was constantly demanding quick

results. He had had to defend the line, the wise line, of giving a free hand to the technicians and the scientists and not to tempt them into producing quick and spectacular results before they were ready. We could not scrap all the research work of the last five years. He supported the Prime Minister's proposals.

Sir John Simon pointed out that the programme had provided that if one ship failed there should be another to carry on the experiment. He took the view that the course the Prime Minister recommended was the right one. He did not think it proved that travel by airship had an assured future, but that the disaster did not disprove the case for airships. He mentioned three difficulties which lay before airships, first, to get enough lift. He did not believe that so much real scientific planning and plotting had been applied to any structure in the history of the world as was applied to R101. But she had not enough lift. The second, was to give enough speed to overcome adverse winds. He said that a speed of about 100 or 120 m.p.h. was desirable. He mentioned the impossibility at present of making quite correct weather forecasts. The third difficulty was the unwieldiness of a very large airship for mooring and handling. He explained that an increase of size improved the proportion of lift, and, therefore, there was always a tendency to go for larger ships. He also advocated that the Air Council should include a man whose principal qualification was very high scientific attainment in the branches of science specially concerned with airships. We should, he said, regard airship transport as an international problem, as an attempt by civilised mankind to make more use of the brains and courage of men and of the character of the world. We could not expect America and Germany and other countries to afford us the full advantage of their progress if we did not do something ourselves. We should use R100 on experimental flights.

Major Church urged that airship construction should be regarded, in the words of Professor Southwell, as a great technical adventure.

Sir William Brass did not think the Government was right in carrying on with the airship. He would like to sell R100 to the United States, where they had helium.

Lieut.-Commander Kenworthy was glad that the Government was not spending more than was necessary to carry out scientific experiments.

Sir Philip Sassoon said that we were not justified in scrapping a ship which had cost so much or wasting the experience we had gained. He urged that we should push on with developing flying boats.

Mr. Mander and Mr. Malone opposed the proposals of the Prime Minister. Mr. Wells supported the proposal. Mr. Hardie and Commander Locker-Lampson opposed it. Admiral Murray Sueter spoke of the use of airships as naval scouts. Mr. Montague, Under-Secretary for Air, wound up the debate, saying that R100 would probably continue to use hydrogen, which had given very good results on many airship voyages.