

FLIGHT

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The Government's Air Policy

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S speech at the meeting of the Conservative party at Bristol was informative as well as tactful. It was no mean exercise of tact to draw the impetuous Lord Lloyd into line with the Government, and to get a resolution passed which satisfied all sections of Conservative feeling. The resolution as finally passed ran:—"That this conference desires to record its grave anxiety in regard to the inadequacy of the provisions made for Imperial defence, and assures the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, heavy as are its burdens, it prefers the security and safety of our native land above all other benefits."

In moving this addendum, Mr. Chamberlain told the conference that the Government had made a prolonged investigation of the defences of the Empire in conjunction with those who can speak with the greatest authority on behalf of the various Services, and had formulated plans which, however, might have to be altered in one direction or another as time went on and the conditions changed. The only definite pronouncement which the Government had made was about the Air Force, because an attack from the air might affect personally any man, woman, or child in the country. That did not apply to the same extent to attacks by armies or navies.

Everyone will feel happier for knowing that the Government has made this careful examination of the subject, and that it is not so besotted with ideals as to have overlooked the realities of the situation. Cautious advance by leaders who know what they are doing inspires confidence. The country in general has lately been disturbed because all the indications were that the Government was more devoted to making gestures at Geneva than to guarding the country from danger. Mr. Chamberlain's speech has cleared the air.

The Chancellor's warning against undue hurry was also timely. "Do not make the mistake," he said, "of supposing that if you are in too great a hurry to increase your responsibilities you can have so efficient a Force

as if you carried through an ordered plan. To make your Air Force efficient it must be properly balanced, with a proper amount of stores and supplies and different types of aeroplanes which must be adapted to the different purposes they have to serve. If you are going suddenly to bring in some new type before it has been thoroughly tested, or if you are going to develop one part of the Air Force out of proportion to the rest, you will not have such a good Force as if you had had time to develop it in an orderly manner."

Evidently Mr. Chamberlain is no convert to the idea (with which we dealt in a leading article last week) of having one General Purpose type for nearly all duties. It is quite true that ordered development will produce better results than panicky haste. Certainly introduction of a new type before it has been thoroughly tested is about the last crime of which we should think of accusing the Air Ministry. They are very deliberate in this matter, and quite rightly so. Where we are inclined to criticise the Ministry is for lack of haste in distributing a new type once it has been tested and approved. The new type is almost always out of date before it has reached the last of the squadrons for which it has been intended. It is to be hoped that the Ministry will not interpret Mr. Chamberlain's speech as an excuse for delaying reform in the distribution of new types.

Progress

WITH the start of the England-Australia Race little more than a week ahead, we have felt that a record of the attempts, successful and otherwise, which have previously been made to bring closer together the "Old Country" and Australia could not fail to be of interest to readers of *Flight*. The list will be found on pp. 1062-1063, and it is surely indicative of the enormous strides made during the fifteen years since the first flight was made that the time of four weeks will very probably be reduced by the winner of the MacRobertson Race to well under four days. It is fitting that in contemplating the immediate