

FLIGHT

and
AIRCRAFT ENGINEER

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The Outlook

Aeronautical Research

FLYING has reached the end of one stage in its evolution and is entering upon another. The well-nigh unlimited power which can be crammed into an aircraft in the form of turbo-jets and turbo-air screws has made possible speeds which would have seemed fantastic a few years ago. We had discovered fairly clearly how the air behaves around a body moving through it at the speeds attainable with the power plants then existing, although we could hardly claim that every problem had been solved.

The higher speeds, speeds in the sonic and supersonic regions, have set us back once more into the same stage of ignorance as that which hindered the earliest attempts at mechanically-propelled flight. And it is not only the airframe which raises new problems; the power plants themselves are of such novel conception that much development work will be needed before they can reach the stage of perfection attained by the piston engine.

An inevitable result of this state of affairs has been that a need has arisen for very extensive—and expensive—research. If the British Commonwealth is to maintain a position in the forefront of these new developments, no one of its members can alone shoulder the financial burden, nor can it provide all the brain power required to examine the many directions in which knowledge should be sought.

This was realized some time ago, and in 1945 the Government of the United Kingdom suggested to the Government of Australia that the British Commonwealth of Nations should set up a council for the co-ordination and encouragement of aeronautical research within the British Commonwealth. After some preliminary negotiations, a conference was held in London, in 1946, and out of that conference has grown the Commonwealth Advisory Aeronautical Research Council, which held its first meeting at Canberra on April 2nd.

Representatives from the U.K., Australia, Canada,

South Africa, and New Zealand attended the meeting, which was opened by Mr. John J. Dedman, who is Minister of Defence, Minister for Post-war Reconstruction, and Minister in Charge of Scientific and Industrial Research. He stressed the fact that the C.A.A.R.C., is parallel to the organization of the British Commonwealth itself, a voluntary association of free peoples coming together for consultation and mutual assistance.

Sharing the Task

BASICALLY the setting-up of a Commonwealth Advisory Aeronautical Research Council is obviously to be welcomed wholeheartedly. It is a logical part of the general British Commonwealth scheme, and although the difficulties that will arise in apportioning what particular research shall be undertaken by each of the nations concerned are obviously considerable, there is no reason to doubt that they will be overcome. The Canberra meeting showed that a spirit of willingness to compromise in order to avoid overlapping of expensive research animated the delegates.

Australia itself provides a fine example of this. The Australian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, through its Division of Aeronautics, has already invested some £350,000 in research facilities, and is spending something like £150,000 annually on staff and experimental work. In proportion to the size of the population that is a worth-while contribution, and it should be borne in mind that, as Mr. Dedman pointed out, the needs of the local industry and of the R.A.A.F. are small, and the greater part of any Australian research results will be used by other nations of the British Commonwealth, some of which are a good deal better equipped than is Australia.

At the meeting in Australia, the broad outlines to be followed are being sketched out. Afterwards it will be for the respective Governments to accept any recommendations made, and to vote the necessary sums. It is as