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Comet-Year

AN eagerly awaited *début*, that of de Havilland's D.H. 106 Comet, has made this week one of the most important of the aviation year. Upon this very advanced turbojet airliner are pinned not only our hopes but also, to a considerable extent, the reputation of the industry and of British airline operators. It is within the capabilities of the D.H. 106 to place this country in the lead so far as modern long-range, high-speed transport is concerned, and to it, we believe, will be accorded the honour of becoming the first jet-propelled passenger transport to operate on the world air routes.

Remarkably rapid progress has been made towards completion during recent months, and the machine is now ready to commence taxiing trials. Prudently the makers have requested that comment shall be guarded and details remain confidential until the aircraft makes its first flight in the near future.

Lecturing as an Art

THE spoken word possesses a lasting quality and force which cannot be reproduced in print, however well and carefully the phrases may be written. Parents who take the trouble to read stories aloud to their children are usually rewarded by the appreciation and lasting impression their efforts produce. In this matter many of us remain young, and although it may often be difficult, and even tedious, to concentrate upon reading a technical treatise for ourselves, if the words are read aloud, or better still, the information is spoken by the author, they become at once vital and palatable.

Some observations on the quality and delivery of technical papers which should not pass unnoticed in this country were made by Mr. S. Paul Johnson in the journal of the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, to which he is technical adviser. Mr. Johnson pays a compliment to the authors of technical papers from the British industry and, in particular, by implication, to those who read papers at the recent Anglo-American Conference at New York. He writes: "We have learned a great deal from our Royal Aeronautical Society contemporaries. . . . It is apparent that the *average* British paper has been subjected to more thought and effort from the earliest stages of preparation than is given to the *average* American paper. . . . On the whole our friends from England generally make better presentations than we do."

We have been privileged to hear some outstanding contributions to aeronautical knowledge from American authors, and we can be proud to learn that the standard of British lectures is regarded as high. In his editorial Mr. Johnson continues: "Perhaps the early training of engineers has something to do with it. Possibly, too, advance rehearsal helps. . . ."

At the time of the Anglo-American Conference we indicated that some papers were a little disappointing, others were rushed, and moreover there was general regret among British delegates that little or no time was devoted to discussion. On this subject Mr. Johnson adds: "Then, in matters of discussion, our British cousins are certainly more adept than are we. Here, we are sure, the matter rests on training and custom. From school-days on most educated Englishmen are accustomed to debate. By analyzing and searching for the flaws in the other fellow's argument, they bring to light facts that may have been overlooked or under-emphasized. . . . We are too often prone to let a paper go by with little, if anything, beyond a few casual questions—and it is generally our loss."

With a new lecture season approaching, it is timely to be considering how best to maintain and, where possible, improve the high standard expected and attained in this country. While taking pride in the complimentary opinions of our friends of the I.A.S., we cannot afford to become complacent. Without mentioning names we would also appeal to a number of senior British technicians, possessing unquestionable talents, who are seldom, if ever, seen on our lecture platforms, to come forward this winter so that the rising generation of aeronautical scientists (and through them the industry) may benefit from their knowledge and experience.