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The Drop of a Hat

A MAN may rightly aspire to knighthood only through the merit of his achievements; and Vickers' George Edwards wrought valiantly and long, without trace of self-interest, before Her Majesty was lately pleased to raise him to the dignity of chivalry. But an aeroplane designed or sponsored by a man of such reputation and integrity may gain the highest recognition even before its birth.

The reflection is prompted by the acceptance by Trans-Canada Air Lines of the Vickers Vanguard, an airliner now being moulded in the character of the redoubtable Viscount: a worker and a winner.

Only a pedant would protest here that the Vanguard was not designed and sold by George Edwards single-handed; that on Rolls-Royce and many others, as well as on the Vickers organization, the honours must rightly fall; and that there was in any case a natural predisposition on T.C.A.'s part to order one Vickers/Rolls-Royce machine to succeed another.

All this we know well. But there is something else we know: that the operator's decision was founded upon a plain, immutable, incontestable fact—a fact which the niggers and quibblers should have forced down their gullets three times daily. It is that T.C.A. chose the Vanguard for the reason that it was the best available aeroplane in the world to meet their needs. And the reason why it was the best aeroplane in the world for the job is that George Edwards in person took good care to see that this should be so.

We have, then, a double accolade to celebrate—a knighthood for the man; New World acceptance for the machine. And though we do not forget the admonition of Air Commodore Banks about the industry's partiality for throwing a party at the drop of a hat, we nevertheless rise (hatless) to propose the toast of The Vanguard, coupled with the name of George Edwards. The toast will not, we believe, go unhonoured.

Pantobase

SADLY and often have we deplored Britain's neglect of marine aircraft, though we have always reasoned that they must be allowed to survive on their merits and not be preserved out of sentiment, like some exotic species of water-fowl. Their near-extinction, of course, is the result of financial stringency rather than spiteful repression; but while it may be true that our nation cannot afford fleets of aerial dreadnoughts, such as the multi-jet Martin SeaMaster (a 600 m.p.h. mine-layer) it is equally certain that we must continually review the possibilities of providing ourselves with marine aircraft in an economical manner.

One method of so doing—and at the same time of greatly extending the operational capabilities of selected aircraft—might be to investigate, in theory and practice, the "pantobase" formula as now under development by Stroukoff.

Diligent readers will recall that this scheme allows a high-wing landplane of medium or large size, and having the required propeller clearance, to be adapted to operate with equal facility from water, snow, ice or unprepared ground as well as from normal runways. It entails the sealing of the hull for flotation and the fitting of skis, for land or water use, extensible from the hull bottom. The normal retractable land undercarriage may be retained and outboard stabilizing floats must be fitted.

While we can be certain that pantobase possibilities have not been overlooked at Cowes, where Saunders-Roe, Ltd., have done a considerable amount of practical work on hydro-skis, it would be reassuring to know that the dictators of operational requirements, both military and civil, have the scheme closely at heart. It would be a shame if the Americans (as seems possible) should go on to evolve and exploit short-take-off, short-landing, turboprop transports and utility aircraft on the new principle, while the British Commonwealth (wherein one might expect the scheme to find wide and profitable employment) hobbled lamely and remorsefully behind.