

AIR COMMERCE

MOMENTOUS WORDS—1

ONE of the biggest sticks which can be waved at I.A.T.A. by the British Government is the threat to fix its own fares on overseas cabotage routes. If fares to, say, Hong Kong or Nairobi were fixed at levels lower than those prescribed by I.A.T.A., by a Ministry which has powers so to do, the international fare structure could—to use a familiar phrase—be seriously undermined.

Hitherto there has never been any official suggestion that Britain should rock the I.A.T.A. boat by exercising its rights to fix fares on colonial cabotage routes. (A comment on the possibility appeared in *Flight*, May 22, page 721.) However, I.A.T.A. has now been reminded by the Minister of Transport that these rights can be exercised—and will if necessary be exercised. (In the Minister's mind, no doubt, are the independents' "V.L.F." applications.)

Speaking at the annual luncheon of the Air Registration Board at Claridges in July, Mr. Harold Watkinson said: "It is with the Government's full support that British airlines at I.A.T.A. in September will press very strongly for the adoption of economy class fares throughout the world airline structure. I hope that I.A.T.A. will agree to these fare reductions. It is the Government's view that we should achieve them in an orderly way through I.A.T.A. But I must make it plain that if our wishes are frustrated in this body we should then have to consider anew what we might do within the areas which are still under our own control, and I do not rule out some moves on the cabotage front if we fail to get material reductions through I.A.T.A."

MOMENTOUS WORDS—2

ON the same occasion the Minister repeated, with just that much more emphasis, what he had said at the B.I.A.T.A. dinner at the Dorchester last November (see "The Minister Drops a Hint," *Flight*, November 21, 1958):—

"At home, as I have said before, my thoughts are turning very much to the concept of a freer pattern of air transport. This, I think, would be best achieved by the concept of a new, more independent licensing authority. This, of course, would need legislation and no doubt changes in existing legislation. It is, therefore, a matter for the next Parliament."

The future rôle of the A.T.A.C. to which the Minister was indirectly referring, is discussed in a leading article.

THE SOUTHALL ACCIDENT

THE report by the Commissioner of the Public Inquiry into the accident to Viking G-AIJE at Southall on September 2, 1958, was published early in July. The criticisms the report contained were probably the harshest that have ever been raised in connection with an accident to a British aircraft, and have since been widely discussed in the House of Commons and elsewhere. In particular, in the half-day debate on Civil Aviation in the House on July 20, more time was devoted to a discussion of various aspects of the report and its recommendations—including a spirited defence of the then managing director of Independent Air Travel, Capt. Kozubski—than to debating the report of the Select Committee on Nationalized Industries.

In view of the gravity of this report, its implications, and the changes to British air transport that may accrue from its discussion, we shall shortly be reviewing both report and discussion at greater length than is possible in this first issue of *Flight* after the break in publication caused by the printing dispute.

A SMALLER D.H.121

IN these columns seven months ago, on January 23, 1959 (page 143), we referred to "a subtle change of emphasis in the definition of the D.H.121," having previously reported the views of Mr. B. S. Shenstone, B.E.A.'s chief engineer, on the optimum kind of short-range jet airliner. In "Subsonic Setback?" (*Flight*, May 29) the arguments were aired for a smaller new-look D.H.121. And for many months Bristol have been urging upon

B.E.A. and others, in the shape of the Bristol 205 project, a much smaller design of jet airliner. It is now reported that B.E.A. and Airco have decided on a smaller D.H.121.

At the S.B.A.C. Display in September last year, the Airco companies (de Havilland, Hunting and Fairey) were talking in terms of an airliner weighing nearly 123,000 lb, with a maximum seating capacity (six-abreast economy class) of 111. For longer ranges than those specified by B.E.A. (a maximum of 1,000 statute miles) maximum weight could be increased to 140,000-150,000 lb.

The capacity of a fleet of 24 such big jet airliners was such as to indicate that, even assuming very large annual increases of traffic, and the disposal of all the Corporation's Viscounts, B.E.A. would not be able to justify the large capacity of the fleets which it had on order (*Flight*, February 28, 1958).

The smaller, 70-80 passenger D.H.121 now proposed would have three advantages: (1) It will permit B.E.A. to exploit its turboprop equipment more fully than would otherwise have been the case; (2) It will provide the Corporation with a jet of smaller unit traffic capacity, thus allowing much more flexibility as to frequency, a commodity still lacking in European operations. (3) It will provide de Havilland and its partners in Airco with a much more marketable product for export in competition with the comparable DC-9. (The larger D.H.121, now abandoned, would have been competing with the Convair 880 and the Boeing 720 some four years after deliveries of these aircraft.)

The *Daily Telegraph* reports that de Havilland have spent £800,000 on D.H.121 work to date, and that the question of reparations is causing "considerable embarrassment." How this cost will be recovered remains to be seen; it is, of course, likely that the price of the D.H.121 (£1.05m per aircraft originally) will be reduced with its size.

The problem, probably by now resolved, is whether to employ two RB.141s (incidentally allowing a design for conversion, for export airlines which might want it, to four engines) or whether to employ three engines of lower power, such as would be offered by the still-unofficial Rolls-Royce RB.140—or yet another engine—of 8,000 lb thrust. It has been reported that Rolls-Royce are seeking a Ministry contract for the development of the RB.140 for the D.H.121, suggesting that the three-engined formula still stands.

The original programme for the D.H.121, showing the dates due for progress payments (and indicating that the contract was to have been signed as long ago as November, 1958) was given as Appendix 4 to the recent Select Committee's report on the Air Corporations. Price was assumed at £1.05m per aircraft, the sixteenth progress payment (ten per cent) being due for payment "with aircraft complete to engine test" on June 30, 1961. In the Commons on July 6, the Minister of Supply, answering questions about the change in the D.H.121 specification, said that the first flight was now expected in late 1961, with deliveries in the autumn of 1963. This programme still accords with the dates suggested by a chart in B.E.A.'s 1957-58 annual report commented on in *Flight* for January 23, page 143.

FIRST ORDERS FOR CIVIL HERCULES

PAN AMERICAN and Slick have both placed orders for Lockheed GL-207 Super Hercules freighters. Slick, the U.S. domestic cargo carrier, has placed an initial order for six, worth about £7.8m (they anticipate an eventual increase of their fleet to include 11 Super Hercules), and PanAm for 12 at a total cost of £22m. Both airlines hope to put the aircraft into operation in 1962.

The commercial version of the U.S.A.F. Hercules freighter has been on offer to the airlines for "early delivery" since May this year, and these orders—together with those from Flying Tiger and Seaboard and Western for CL-44s—are evidence of growing confidence in the expansion of air freight business. The Super Hercules has a payload capacity of 77,000 lb, considerably in excess of any other type on offer for commercial use. Provided this great capacity can be filled (the aircraft itself has an all-up weight of 230,000 lb and a cargo volume of 7,500 cu ft) low freight rates and a direct operating cost of less than four cents per ton-mile should be possible.

Power for the Super Hercules will be provided by four Allison Model 550s, a turboprop in the 5,000 s.h.p. class now being developed under U.S. Air Force contract as the T61. The order was announced on July 21.

U.K. delegates to the 12th I.C.A.O. Assembly at San Diego last month (to be reported in a later issue) were I. to R.: A. W. G. Kean, delegate; G/C. J. B. Veal, delegate; A. H. Watson, delegate; J. H. Riddoch, alternate chief delegate; M. M. V. Custance, chief delegate

