

An historic moment in Douglas history was recorded on August 31, when the DC-8 was awarded its certificate of airworthiness. Here it is being handed by the Administrator of the F.A.A., Mr. E. R. Quesada (left), to the chairman and founder of Douglas Aircraft Company, Mr. Donald W. Douglas. Scheduled DC-8 services were inaugurated by United between New York and San Francisco on September 18, and on the same day Delta put DC-8s on to its N.Y.-Atlanta route

a C.A.B. request for airline opinion about possible Government-guaranteed loans for the purchase of all-cargo aircraft (see overleaf), Riddle said that, had such a guarantee been available now, the airline would have already entered into a firm Argosy contract for the earliest delivery. To these remarks, made at the end of August, Riddle added that the Argosy would "move it into a profit position."

VISCOUNT STOCKTAKING

AS is inevitable when production of an established product like the Viscount gives way to the Vanguard, some confusion has arisen over the Viscount delivery situation. It is appropriate to record the present position in order to clarify what types of this best-seller can still be delivered and when.

To date, 407 Viscounts of all types have been sold. Of these 404 have been delivered. The balance of three is made up as follows: Pakistan International Airlines, one V.815; Misrair, one V.739; Tennessee Gas Transmission, one V.835 (ex-Cubana). These three aircraft are due to be delivered shortly.

In addition, there are 14 Viscounts in stock or in production. These are not yet allocated to customers, and they are listed as follows: one V.745 (ex-Capital and ex-T.A.A.); two V.744s (ex-Capital); two V.816s (built against a provisional order from T.A.A.); one V.810 (the prototype). All the above are in stock and are available for immediate delivery, with the exception of the 810 prototype which is available for "early" delivery.

In addition, nine V.810s are on the production line at Weybridge, and are available for delivery between now and the early part of 1960. Though there are no V.700s on the production line, new aircraft of this type can be produced for delivery within about 20 months.

The Viscount demonstrated at the S.B.A.C. Display in the colours of T.A.A. was one of the two 816s mentioned above, and was not an 812 as incorrectly reported in our Farnborough Report issue of September 11.

ECONOMY LIP-SERVICE?

BOTH B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. have consistently over the past year declared their intention to advocate the extension of economy-class services, and they have been publicly supported by the Minister. But there is evidence to suggest that their deeds may not be as determined as their words. The evidence is worth considering at this time, when the annual I.A.T.A. fares conference is in session at Honolulu to decide what fares shall be charged during the year beginning April 1, 1960.

A previous note in *Flight* ("Second Thoughts," September 4) suggested that B.E.A. are not as determined as had been generally supposed on extending economy-class service to Europe next year. To recapitulate briefly, the Corporation recently compromised its position before the I.A.T.A. fares-battle at Honolulu by publicly saying that "practical difficulties" facing other airlines will make the implementation of economy fares difficult in 1960. Instead, a more moderate policy of tourist differentials on holiday routes would be pursued.

Can it be that B.E.A. are so satisfied with the way their traffic has recovered and boomed (see "How Grows It?" September 11) that they feel the market will continue to bear the prices at present being charged? Certainly tourist differentials can improve economics by flattening out the costly traffic peaks that characterize B.E.A.'s year. But it is not easy to see how such fares alone can expand traffic exuberantly enough to fill the very big increase in capacity that B.E.A. will have available to schedule next summer.

Next June, when the Corporation is well on the ascent to its summer traffic peak, B.E.A. will have available for service at least four of its seven Comet 4Bs (all of which are due for delivery by the summer). In addition, the Corporation will have at least three Vanguards available for service at this time.

These initial fleets of Comets and Vanguards will be equivalent, in terms of seat-miles per hour, to another fleet of 20 Viscount 700s. Traffic will thus have to expand at a very high rate if all the seats available next summer are to be filled—particularly when account is taken of the fact that all Viscount 700s and 800s are to have increased seating. (Already nine of B.E.A.'s 25 V.700s have seating increased from 47 to 63; about 12 will have been converted by August 1960. Likewise, work will start in April on the conversion of all 21 V.800s from 57 to 66 or, without catering, 72 seats. Of course, many DC-3 services will be taken over by the high-density Viscounts. But it is evident that there will still be an

addition of at least 40 per cent to B.E.A.'s trunk-line capacity next summer. Will present fares and promotional discounts alone ensure that all this capacity will be filled at economic load factors?

At first sight B.O.A.C.'s economy-fares policy appears more convincing. Writing in *The Financial Times* Sir Gerard d'Erlander says: "If we are frustrated at the next I.A.T.A. conference [now meeting at Honolulu] we may well make plans to introduce lower fares wherever we have the right to do so, backed by the British Government, and rights we certainly have, wherever we have some cabotage area. That we have not taken advantage of our favourable position in the past is due in large measure to the fact that we have played fair with I.A.T.A. We cannot, however, stand by and watch potential trade stifled."

Strong words indeed, especially when considered in the light of certain significant evidence given in the recent Parliamentary Select Committee's report. As already noted in *Flight* (August 21), a memorandum from B.O.A.C. (page xxi of the report) reveals that the Corporation considers tourist-class fares to make exactly the right profit; and using these as an index it was shown how other fares would have to be "adjusted" to make them equally profitable. Economy class on the North Atlantic was shown to require a 12 per cent increase—which would put economy fares back (within 15 shillings) to the tourist level prevailing before April 1958. In other words, since sandwiches were banished months ago, economy class would, except for 34in seat pitch, be the old tourist-class by another name.

This evidence in the Select Committee report is 14 months old, and the figure of 12 per cent was presumably theoretical rather than a declaration of intentions. But it prompts doubts as to what B.O.A.C. mean by the "economy class" service that they propose to extend to Commonwealth routes. A reasonable definition of economy class would be a service priced at about 15 per cent below existing tourist levels, with reduced frills. It may well be that B.O.A.C. are indeed proposing such economy fares for the Commonwealth routes. Certainly an economy fare of anything less than 10 per cent below existing tourist levels would be a disillusioning devaluation of the word economy—particularly when considered in the light of the independent "V.L.F." proposals for British cabotage routes, which average 48 per cent below existing tourist levels.

J. M. R.



AIR COMMERCE

RIDDLE'S ARGOSIES

IT was remarked at the S.B.A.C. Display that neither of the two A.W.650 Argosies on show appeared in the markings of Riddle Airlines. One aircraft, G-APRN, was exhibited at the Paris Salon in June in Riddle colours but these had evidently been removed just before the S.B.A.C. Display.

Is Riddle's provisional order for Argosies (*Flight*, February 27) in doubt? This order was signed by Mr. George L. Giles, who joined Riddle as president early in 1958 (and who in the space of 12 months converted it from a sick company to one which—if not yet profitable—is determined to be so).

Last month, reportedly as a result of disagreements over policy, Mr. Giles resigned, and his resignation put the Argosy order in jeopardy. But the acting president, Mr. E. T. Thompson, has signified to Armstrong Whitworth that the provisional order for four Argosies still stands, though the airline has not (according to *Aviation Daily*) yet succeeded in arranging finance. In reply to