

Recently introduced at London Heathrow is a high speed turn-off 6,000ft from the threshold of runway 10L. The first of its kind at London, it is intended for aircraft bound for the central area. A new taxiway and run-up area (arrowed) is also now in use, and allow runways 23L and 28R to be used simultaneously

MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE

REPERCUSSIONS from the Elizabethan accident at Munich on that cold day in February 1958 are still being felt. Last Monday was the third anniversary of the accident, and the expiry date of the three months' notice of dismissal given to the pilot, Capt James Thain, following the findings of the Fay Commission last October.

Questions about support for Capt Thain's reinstatement or compensation, even to the extent of staging a 24hr protest strike against his dismissal, are being asked this week of 750 BEA pilots in a referendum held by the BEA council of the British Air Line Pilots Association.

It does not follow that strike action is endorsed by the Association: this is a principle on which members' views apparently differ widely. Writing in the August issue of BALPA's journal *The Log*, Capt W. T. Mellor said in relation to strike action as a negotiating weapon: "It could do nothing but great damage to our status in the public mind, unless such action was taken on the issue which directly affected safety of the travelling or general public."

A question of safety is at stake here, but the principal issue is one of unity—a possible protest against the dismissal of a pilot after an accident, the causes of which are contested. But in the light of BALPA's acceptance of the report of the Fay Commission—albeit with reservations about the establishment of a pilot's responsibility for an accident and the withdrawal of his licence—it would not appear valid for BEA pilots to claim that Capt Thain was wrongfully dismissed, only that dismissal was unduly harsh.

It has been argued by the Association that had there not been an accident the two counts on which Capt Thain lost his job—not satisfying himself before take-off that the wings were free of ice, and sitting in the right-hand, second pilot's seat—were not sufficient in themselves to justify dismissal.

If the majority of BEA pilots do decide in favour of a protest strike, it will be the first occasion in British civil aviation history on which pilots have withdrawn their labour. But as BALPA have demonstrated before, upon questions of principle they do not easily let go, and they are clearly not prepared to see Capt Thain sink into convenient oblivion before his dismissal has been challenged. If the decision cannot be reversed, they would like to see him adequately compensated, but the real goal remains the reopening of the inquiry, from which, the Association believe, would follow a reversal of the German court's findings.

—AND A PRECEDENT FOR THE PILOTS

ON January 27 the British Air Line Pilots Association made a flight evaluation of the Argosy. The object of the flight, organized by Armstrong Whitworth, was to assess those characteristics and components with which pilots are most concerned.

This is the first time an aircraft manufacturer has arranged such an evaluation for BALPA. It is the culmination of discussions and exchanges of opinions, with emphasis on flight deck layout, between the two organizations from the time the Argosy was at



an early stage of design. As well as sampling the handling and performance characteristics the Association has discussed certain features of the structure and the integrity of the major systems.

The flight from Bitteswell was made at around 80,000lb and included: (1) an assessment of control characteristics during the approach to the stall; (2) instrument approaches; (3) overshoots and engine failures—both at V_1 and on the approach to land. The evaluation team's final report will be submitted to Armstrong Whitworth and to the executive council of BALPA.

The evaluation team consisted of Captain M. W. Broom, chairman of BALPA's technical committee; Capt A. Spooner; Capt R. I. Hill; Mr D. H. Lambert; and Mr L. F. E. Coombs.

AEROFLOT REVIEWED

AT London Airport on January 31 was given possibly the first-ever public lecture in the West about Aeroflot, Russia's domestic and overseas airline. As Captain Yarotski, Aeroflot's representative in London, explained, Aeroflot is responsible for much more than 300,000km of internal routes and 65,000km of international ones, since all civil aviation comes within its province. This includes responsibility for about 3,000 civil aircraft, for civil airports and for navigational services.

There is a state plan for the airline's development, and in the period 1958-65 traffic should increase sixfold (largely by tapping present rail traffic), piston-engined aircraft should be phased-out and 90 airports should either be built or reconstructed. Among these was a new airport (Domodedovo) which was under construction 35 km south-east of Moscow. It would have two fingers with stands for five aircraft at each, and would be in service at the beginning of 1962. (See *Flight*, December 23, 1960.)

In answer to questions, which occupied the greater part of the session, it was said that Aeroflot published no annual report and accounts and that utilization of aircraft was less than that of other operators—"safety and regularity were always the first consideration," although Capt Yarotski could give no current figures for safety rates.

There was, the speaker said, no noise suppression problem in Russia, and the industry was working on a supersonic aircraft. Fares were lower now than the train fare on the services between Moscow and Leningrad and Moscow and the Far East, and it was Aeroflot's aim to take passenger traffic from the railways. In answer to other questions it was said that maximum duty time for pilots is 6 to 8 hours and that there are training schools for youths who wish to enter the organization. Capt Yarotski said that there were twelve types of aircraft and helicopters in Aeroflot service, as follows: Tu-104, Tu-114, Tu-124; Il-12, Il-14, Il-18; An-2, An-10; Yak-12; and Mil-1, Mil-4 and Kamov 15 helicopters.

Karachi Airport's new US Corps of Engineers-designed 10,500ft runway, complete with 1,000ft over-runs, high-speed turn-off (the first in Asia) and five-stage-intensity approach and runway lights, was opened on January 25 by Mr M. Shoib, Pakistan's Minister of Finance (left). On the right is Air Cdre A. Qadir, Director-General of Civil Aviation. The runway will not finally be complete until June

