

it decided that on two of the four points the witnesses did not wilfully seek to mislead it, but that on the other two there was insufficient evidence for a firm conclusion.

It adds that it feels bound to record its view that much of the evidence given to the committee in 1967 was "inadequate and confusing," and that on the basis of the new evidence it had heard, the company's financial administration was "even more deserving of stricture than it appeared to the committee of 1967."

No Concorde "Race"

Lord Beswick emphasised in a Parliamentary statement recently that there was no question of a "race" between Concorde 001 and 002; both used exactly the same components, and if there were any modifications of these, it was planned that the French would have them first. Answering Lord Trefgarne, he said that the manufacturers would be making a statement about the revised first flight date of the Toulouse-assembled aircraft; first flight of the Bristol-assembled one remained planned for September 1968 and grant of a C of A was planned for 1971, in time for deliveries to airlines to begin before the end of that year.

The Man Who Shot the Bridge

The RAF pilot who flew a Hunter FGA.9 through Tower Bridge, London, on April 5 was no youthful prankster but a senior flight commander of 1 Sqn, RAF West Raynham, an Old Cranwellian, and the father of four children.

He was Flt Lt Alan Richard Pollock, aged 32. He was named on Sunday, April 7, by MoD (Air) too late, owing to Easter press schedules, for mention in our last week's story. Flt Lt Pollock was placed under close arrest on April 5 and released into open arrest on April 7. A board of inquiry was convened at West Raynham on April 8. An all-party motion signed by six MPs was tabled in the Commons in his support but was ruled unacceptable.

Whatever their views on the responsibility and possible consequences of flying a jet fighter through the 200ft-wide, 110ft-deep aperture framed by the towers, the bascules and the upper span of Tower Bridge, there is unanimity among pilots that it was a handsome piece of flying.

Flt Lt Pollock was the first pilot to fly through the bridge in a downstream direction, following the gentle sinuosities of King's Reach from the Waterloo bend—and passing over Blackfriars' two bridges (road and rail), Southwark Bridge, Cannon Street rail bridge, and London Bridge. After clearing the last he probably had little more than five seconds to align himself with the eye of the needle presented by Tower Bridge, retaining until the last fraction of a second the option of pulling up had he found the opening partly obstructed by abnormally high vehicles, by hanging cradles or by the bascules opening.

It has been reported that Flt Lt

Pollock peeled off from a formation returning from RAF Tangmere, where he had led four Hunters on display duties. This might have accounted for his choice of direction. The absence of pre-placed photographers, who always seem to have been around on previous Tower Bridge buzzings, seems to rule out premeditation. Another explanation of why he preferred the crane-lined Upper Pool downstream of Tower Bridge for his climb-out when all previous pilots have used it for the run in may have been to avoid climbing through flight levels occupied by airliners on the approach to Heathrow had he made a westerly climb-out. He turned to port over the City.

The RAF and civil authorities were tussling last week about whether Flt Lt Pollock should be court-martialled or tried in a civil court. His one-man fly-past was construed in and outside the RAF as an expression of resentment felt by many in the Service—including those now responsible for deciding his punishment—of the way the Royal Air Force is being treated by the Government. It may be that the last straw was the cancellation of the 50th anniversary fly-past over the capital on April 1. A fly-past planned in conjunction with the Lancaster House dinner with the Queen was cancelled at the last moment as "inappropriate." A mid-day fly-past, seen by the maximum number of Londoners and visitors, would have been most "appropriate" on this occasion.

Attitudes to the Tower Bridge exploit of past and present members of the RAF whom we have questioned vary from the very strongly censorious to the frankly admiring; but an unvarying theme was that some RAF protest is called for, without infringing flying discipline.

UKVG and Project Hornet

Some unsuccessful probing on the present status of the British variable-geometry project and of European countries' possible interest in it occurred in the House of Lords on April 8, Lord Shackleton saying that the Government could not make any statement at this stage.

The Earl of Kinnoull had asked when the Government expected to make a further statement on the future of the project, whether it was still intended that the aircraft should replace the V-bombers, and whether their phasing-out had been extended "due to the delay in ordering a replacement."

In addition, Lord St Oswald wanted to know whether the Government had made any contacts with the Dutch, Belgian, German and Italian Governments, who he believed had formed a committee under the "Hornet" project to study the F-104 successor question; and Lord Trefgarne asked how far the UKVG had gone in technical development.

Lord Shackleton admitted that "contact is being held particularly at the moment with the German authorities at several levels," but was not prepared to give any further information.

SENSOR

A radically new type of special-purpose, four-engined commercial aircraft is being developed by Slingsby under contract to a US aircraft company. The unconventional amphibious design features remarkable length for such purposes as aerial advertising, ultra-long cargo and geomagnetic survey. Fundamentally new technology is involved based on a \$1.25 million development programme provided by the US firm. A prototype contract is nearing conclusion calling for first flights this year. Further details are to be released in June. The design provides for Rolls-Royce piston engines. Potential export business is worth £2 million by 1970.

The RAF is expected to place an order for several hundred Beagle Pups. (Other Pup news: page 593).

One of the main problems with the British VG (or FCA—future combat aircraft—as it is now known) is that the RAF requirements are not yet fully spelt out. One of the objects of the new feasibility studies is to produce a range of options, and particular regard is being paid to the export market and particularly to the likely requirements of the F-104-replacement consortium.

Feasibility studies of the VG combat aircraft by BAC Warton are the subject of a £½ million contract, with spending at the rate of about £50,000 a month. It is hoped to reach the project-definition stage at the end of August. Among the options is a non-VG development of the Jaguar with greater power.

Cost of launching the RB.211 will be £70 million, more than cost of the bigger RB.207. The smaller engine is the more expensive mainly because of the much tighter time scale. The total of £130 million for the 211 and 207 might come down to about £120 million thanks to the technical "read-across". This will not be too much above the original hope that the two engines could be developed for about £100 million.

The requirement that the British, French and German airlines will commit themselves to 75 airbuses in July is now certain not to be met. This requirement is written into the airbus memorandum of understanding, which agrees that the project will not be proceeded with without this commitment. The question now is how to compromise the word commitment.

Hawker Siddeley is considering presenting to the RAF Museum all the vintage aircraft which the group owns and cares for. These include a Mosquito, Hurricane, Hart, Cirrus Moth, Cygnet, Blackburn B.2 and Sea Fury.