THE GERIATRIC JET PROBLEM

By J. M. RAMSDEN

US operators of older jets. Its "totally disagrees" with safe-life limits on fail-safe aircraft as both "irrational and a waste of physical and economic resources." It prefers to "update maintenance programmes to ensure continued structural integrity," and suggests a review of known data and improved inspection procedures, especially in inaccessible areas. It thinks that "disassembly of selected high-time aircraft" might help the review process.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not been slouching, though its policy seems more concerned with new structures. The FAA recently proposed amended rules for fatigue design following hearings last March. These proposals appear to move FAA fatigue philosophy in a new, more European direction, calling for physical demonstration of fail-safe design. The FAA has never previously required, as the Europeans have, physical fatigue-testing of airframes. The change follows years of Joint Airworthiness Requirements (JAR) discussions in Europe which have been clearly made known to the FAA.

The proposed new FAA rules (Part 25.571) are that the strength, detail design and fabrication of the airframe structure must be such as to avoid catastrophic failure due to fatigue, corrosion, or accidental damage throughout its operational life. This * Comments on these proposed rules are required by November 14. They 16280, 800 Independence Avenue SW, Washington DC 20591.

Above and below "Large numbers of old jets will soon be flooding the second-hand and third-hand markets. Many will pass into less than professional third-world hands."