

~~57000~~  
~~7~~ ~~152~~

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR AERONAUTICS.

157

COMMERCIAL AVIATION IN FRANCE 157

COMMERCIAL AVIATION IN FRANCE.

From "L'Auto," September 29, 1922.

FILE COPY

To be returned to  
the files of the Langley  
Memorial Aeronautical  
Laboratory.

November, 1922.

3



3 1176 01437 3345

## COMMERCIAL AVIATION IN FRANCE. \*

THE POSITIONS GAINED MUST BE CONSOLIDATED: Such is the formula of the aerial policy of the new Director of Aerial Navigation.

Civil Aviation came into being in 1919, immediately after the Armistice. The place was vacant; some one was needed to cover the earth with airplanes transporting passengers, freight and mail. France took the position. The future will show whether those who had the courage to take such a risk acted wisely and well.

To be a pioneer requires a certain amount of recklessness. We went wherever we could. In the twinkling of an eye we created the routes Paris-London, Paris-Brussels, Paris-Strasbourg-Prague-Warsaw, Paris-Geneva, Bordeaux-Toulouse-Montpellier, Nimes-Marseilles, Toulouse-Casablanca, Bayonne-Bilbao, etc. These lines were necessary to the affirmation of our supremacy. They were also useful as a first experience.

At present the supremacy is acquired; the experience also. Now it is time, not to change our policy, but to consolidate the positions gained.

This work of consolidation falls to the lot of Colonel Casse successor of Colonel Saconney as Director of Aerial Navigation, and will be undertaken in close collaboration with Mr. Laurent Eynac, Under Secretary of State for Aeronautics.

In the present state of things, there are three great problems to be solved, relating respectively to the financial, tech-

\* From "L'Auto," September 29, 1922.

nical and commercial aspects of the question. All nations are, or will be, studying these problems, -all nations, that is, who aim at being great aerial powers.

Happy the nation which first finds the solution.

Financial Problem.- Our ordinary budget cannot be increased. Parliament refuses, common sense is against it, and if we attempt to economize in other departments in order to have more money for the Air Service, we shall make a great mistake. Thus, the budget of Civil Aviation has, so to say, reached its ceiling.

Technical Problem.- We have no commercial airplanes equal to the various aims in view. We have no such airplanes in service, but we have them in the offices and laboratories of our factories and on flying fields. It will probably be eighteen months or two years before the three-engined commercial airplanes seen in the last Aviation Show are being used by the Aerial Navigation Companies. The first one built must be tested by the constructor, checked by the S.T.Ae., retested by the constructor, rechecked by the S.T.Ae. Then a few of these airplanes will be ordered and will be tried out in actual service, for an Aerial Navigation Company is no longer allowed to have airplanes made in quantity production before having actually employed them in service. Then the series ordered must be built, and all these divers operations will certainly take the time mentioned above.

In parenthesis we may say that this question has been taken up by the Government and the Under Secretary of State recently wrote to the Chambre Syndicale des Industries Aeronautiques point-

ing out the urgent nature of the question, and declaring that the Government would not "haggle" over the premiums to be awarded to prototypes.

Commercial Problem. - Immediately after the armistice, companies, as well as lines, increased rapidly in number. One had only to present oneself to the S.N.Ae. with a list of names, one of which was known, to be accepted as a Director of an Aerial Navigation Company and receive a subsidy. Almost all of the companies rushed on the lines which promised the best returns. There was much useless intestine competition. In the present state of commercial aviation the companies are spending much more than they earn. The monetary confidence of their shareholders would rapidly be exhausted were it not that there is already a movement towards concentration of action among the various companies.

#### THE GREAT CURRENTS OF AIR TRAFFIC.

We thus catch a glimpse of the policy to be followed by the S.N.Ae. and the S.S.E.

Close down the lines which do not pay. The airplane is a long-distance transport machine and, if possible, should be employed for international distances. We have had enough experience to see clearly what are the great currents of air traffic: Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam, and, eventually, Scandinavia; Paris-Strasbourg-Prague-Warsaw, and, if possible, Russia; Paris-Prague-Constantinople, a line which seems to have reached its horizontal point;

London-Paris-Lyons-Marseilles, and, later, across the Mediterranean when we have large seaplanes or airships; Antibes-Ajaccio-Tunis, on the one hand, Toulouse-Casablanca, on the other, to join the mother-country to French Africa; finally, Algiers-Biskra, with a hoped-for extension to the French Soudan.

Such are the great aerial lines which the S.N.Ae. wishes to maintain. For each of these zones, only one company will be appointed, or rather, only one company will be subsidized. This policy will bring about amalgamations and suppressions. It will be remembered that at one time the Paris-London route was being worked by three French companies, then by two. It is probable that in a few weeks' time the Grands Express Aériens will be amalgamated with the Messageries Aériennes, the latter having the London-Marseilles line and the Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam line.

The Franco-Roumaine Company should evidently have the line which stretches out one arm towards Poland and the other towards Turkey. Latécoère will keep the main line Toulouse-Casablanca and its branches. The Aero-Navale will keep Antibes-Tunis, and the Franco-American Society will be subsidized for all the lines running from the coast of Africa to the desert.

These subsidies will not necessarily mean monopolies. Any other company will be free to work, say, the Paris-London route in competition with another French company, but no subsidy will be granted to the competitor, and this will practically result in excluding competition.

Furthermore, the Aerial Navigation Service does not say that no other lines than these are to be subsidized within a given time. If home affairs permitted, or if international competition demanded further subsidies, we are sure that the Service would not hesitate to abandon its policy of consolidation and would not lightly allow foreigners to work lines which we can work alone or with the help of other nations.

#### LONG DATE SUBSIDIES.

Thus the companies, free from home competition, can set up a strong organization in their respective zones of action. But this is not all. They are not yet making a living. The money granted by the State forms a large part of their annual balance, and this grant is uncertain. It is voted for one year. How are they to know that the following year it will not be refused or greatly reduced? The State ought to make contracts with the Companies running for a period long enough to enable the shareholders to derive a certain profit over and above the interest on the money.

No one would have been found to work one of our railway lines had the concession only covered a period of twelve months. That is why the State is now trying to make ten year contracts. This has been voted by Parliament and probably two ten year concessions will be granted before the end of the year. But the State is considering the granting of thirty year contracts with a guarantee of interest on the capital involved. This scheme is under considera-

tion. Its adoption would inspire financial confidence in the future of commercial aviation.

#### BONUSES FOR COMFORT.

At the present time our companies have a commercial fleet in comparably larger numerically than that of any other country. For instance, there are some airplanes, designed for two hundred hours' flight, which are good for two years. Airplanes of 1920 are still in use. For these airplanes there are not enough spare parts. It is the intention of the government to request the companies to reduce the number of airplanes and to increase their stock of spares so that a time will come when an airplane, instead of having only one engine allotted to it, will have three - one in use, and two as spares. This will mean great saving to the State and will cause no inconvenience to constructors except, perhaps, for a short transition period which may last a year, and the great advantage will be that we shall have only new type airplanes in service.

Finally, the public is right in protesting against uncomfortable cabins. The longer the line, the more comfortable should be the passenger accommodation. In some airplanes the passenger cannot stand the conditions for more than two hours. The Aerial Navigation Service intends to take into account the installation of the cabins when awarding the government grant.

#### THE FUTURE.

Such are the broad lines of the policy which Colonel Casse

intends to follow with, we repeat, the approval of Mr. Laurent Eynac.

Some people think that it differs, on certain points, from the policy of his predecessor. As we have said, the latter has reached the stage of opening up. Colonel Casse wishes to strengthen and consolidate the results gained. This part of the work demands as great efforts as the other, certainly as much courage.

If, in two years from now we can have the commercial airplanes demanded by the public and sought after by the technical service, if the companies have organized their lines so as to have a regular service, daily, if possible, if the companies are able to fortify their financial position, then, without a doubt, we shall have done good work both for the present and for the future.

Translated by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics,  
Paris Office.



