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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Department Editor.....KURT J. KREMLICK

OUR NATIONAL AVIATION PROGRAM. By Charles L. Lawrance.
New York: Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America, Inc., 1932. Pp. xii, 208.

Twelve essays which were published in six aviation magazines from July to December, 1931, have been brought together in book form and offer a clear and accurate picture of the national aeronautical problem and program. The author, as president of the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America, Inc., of course has a mass of statistical information available, but, in addition, possesses a distinct ability to give the reader a comprehensive grasp of the whole aviation picture—its progress and its needs.

The interest of the writer is in aviation as a business. The first chapter is devoted to the present status of the industry, and the author wastes no words on the romance of flying. Instead, he states, in his opening sentence, "The condition of an industry may be gauged by what it produces—and sells." The figures that follow show an estimated 70% sale for military purposes and 30% for private and commercial uses. The purpose of the chapter is to sketch, in broad lines, the present situation relative to all aviation activities and almost every assertion is supported with statistical information.

Four chapters are devoted to military considerations, and it is pointed out that the aircraft industry is a vital factor in any scheme of national defense, that the Air Corps as at present constituted is inadequate to the needs of the country in time of war, and that the naval air service is not over-supplied with adequate equipment. Urging government support of aviation, the author is not to be satisfied with any temporary aid. He says: "The aircraft industry needs definite assurance of continued government support not for a period of one or two years but for at least five." There are many readers, no doubt, who will consider this set of chapters as being purely propaganda for the aviation business by establishing the usual war scare. To the reviewer, they seem eminently sound—particularly so the statement that, "Those opposed to the construction program should remember that we cannot create an aircraft industry capable of meeting the nation's war-time needs on a moment's notice any more than we can build ships over night." Having flown condemned British aircraft on many night patrols during winter weather with no equipment save his own helmet and goggles, the reviewer finds it difficult to consider any of this language as undue propaganda.

Chapter six deals with air transport as a market for aircraft and the author states that the manufacturers of aircraft will be

forced to curtail their research and engineering programs unless the regular air carriers can absorb a greater number of planes annually. The ability of the transport lines to utilize new equipment (estimated for 1931 as 247 planes) will depend very largely on the maintenance of the air mail system. The position of the author is summed up in the following paragraph: "The aircraft manufacturing interests and the air transport system have tremendous commercial and military potentialities. They should not be allowed to disintegrate simply because the air mail is not yet a paying proposition. The Postmaster General not only should be allowed to continue but should be aided in every conceivable way in his efforts to develop a comprehensive scheme of air mail and passenger transportation."

The following three chapters (VII-IX) discuss the development of the air mail service, its cost and economic values, together with the international aspects of linking the Americas. In presenting data as to federal aid to railroads, waterways, and good roads, the author is arguing the cause of aviation. The value of commercial aviation, from its many angles, certainly justifies any such argument.

The author clearly sees the proper service of federal and state control as concerned with the encouragement of aviation and the establishment of a minimum of regulation. State regulation is visualized as necessary—the main need being for uniformity so far as possible. This need for state control is based in part upon a prophecy as to the growth of intrastate flying. The author suggests: "The air mail and transport system, which today forms the backbone of commercial aviation, while of course performing a valued service between cities within the same state that are a considerable distance apart is essentially an *interstate* operation. The quantity aircraft production of the future will come as a result of the development of flying primarily *local* or *intrastate* in character."

In Chapter eleven—devoted to engineering problems—the thesis of the author is to the effect that both commercial and military needs are for engineering progress—which can be expected only if there be definite assurance of governmental support.

The final chapter urges government aid to the lighter-than-air activities—particularly those connected with transoceanic air services. To obtain this governmental assistance, the author favors the passage of the McNary-Parker bill.

No one will deny the propaganda features in this book, yet no one who is familiar with aeronautical problems will fail to appreciate the clean-cut approach to the question and the broad general grasp of the situation which the author has evidenced. There was need for dealing with these problems in a candid manner and in doing that this series of essays is most timely and valuable.

F. D. F.

A HISTORY OF AIRCRAFT. By F. Alexander Magoun and Eric Hodgins. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1931. Pp. xx, 495.

"In all this profusion of works (14,000 books and pamphlets listed by the Smithsonian Institution) ranging from recondite aeronautical mathematics to catch-penny thrillers based upon the sudden emergence of some new 'hero', there is still no inclusive work of prose which considers all types of aircraft from the beginning of record down to contemporary times. This, then, is the lack which this present volume modestly aims to fill." No better need for, or purpose of, the book can be shown than by this excerpt from the preface.

As also stated, "This book is essentially a record of failures. More than half of its pages are concerned with attempts at flight which ended in every possible permutation between disappointment and disaster." However, no story of the successes alone would have been complete. To understand Stephenson's "Rocket", one should know something of the work of Trevithick. The same is true in any field of endeavor.

The historical study is grouped around certain theories of flight—rather than attempting a purely chronological account. The first section is devoted to balloons and parachutes, the second to navigable balloons and airships. There follow four sections on heavier-than-air craft: ornithopters, helicopters, gliders, and airplanes.

The appendices show: (1) world airplane records, (2) a bibliography, and (3) a chronology of flight from 400 B. C. to July, 1931. The airplane records, in the first appendix, extend only through 1929. The duration record, p. 434, is shown as 65 hours in 1929. Page 465 shows a refueling endurance flight of 647 hours in 1930. Even if unofficial, the comparison is worth noting.

While a similar study, made many yeas ago, is available in French (*La Navigation Aérienne*, 1903, by J. Lecornu) the present volume is invaluable as a source book. It is well and carefully written, fully illustrated, and so cleverly subtitled that one fails to find himself bored by a purely historical account of flying.

F. D. F.