

EDITORIAL

Air Power, Civil Aviation and Defense

THE frantic speed with which the U. S. Congress approved (by a vote of 339 to 3) a three-billion-dollar measure to build American air power is an indication that the conclusions of the report "Survival in the Air Age" have not been considered lightly. The people's representatives demanded that the 55-group air force proposal be jumped to 70 groups and rushed the measure to the Senate.

The question of whether or not Canada's current and planned defense program is as reasonable in terms of the international situation, should occupy the attention of every responsible citizen.

In previous issues we have outlined the conclusions of U. S. commissions who investigated the American defense status. Canadian air policy was measured against these conclusions. It was apparent that our air power budget is only one fifth of the amount considered safe by President Truman's Air Policy Commission.

We repeat that the dangerous international situation calls for an immediate and thorough investigation of our defenses.

Accent on Air Power

AN EDITORIAL in the Montreal Gazette states the case for emphasis on air power:

"... it can scarcely be denied that a realistic Canadian defense program should concentrate on the RCAF. Every natural consideration dictates such a new policy or air emphasis here. The vast unpeopled areas of the Dominion cannot be policed except from the air. Canadian experience, taste, and training are predominantly in aviation. Funds expended in training and equipping a disproportionately large Air Force would pay larger dividends in national security than any other possible investment of the national treasury.

"The proper defense of Canada demands that the whole northland be equipped with some technical early warning device; that the armed services be so equipped that any aggressor may be met far from the heavy industrial-residential areas as possible; that there exist a comprehensive system of interchangeable airfields throughout the Dominion; that there be created the largest possible pool of trained ground crew and pilots versed in the latest technical developments of the air; that the most advanced aircraft that exist be made available at least in training numbers; and that there be built up an aircraft industry, however limited, that potentially can service such planes and build more..."

The Role of Civil Aviation

EXISTENCE of air transport facilities capable of spanning the vast wilderness regions of Canada should be a basic defense consideration. Our most ambitious ex-

periment in military movement across the northern tundra, the Muskox Expedition, proved above all that surface vehicles are helpless in the far north without air supply.

An impartial and thorough investigation of our defenses probably would reveal that a considerable amount of our air defense preparedness could be integrated with a plan to support civil aviation.

We have already discussed the plight of the aircraft manufacturing industry. The unique contributions and the potential value of the flying clubs also have received attention. But it seems to us that the importance of the commercial operator of aircraft has not been given sufficient emphasis. A resolution by the Maritime Aviation Association presents the case for the small operator in the following terms:

"Whereas:

"1. Over 90% of the operators and staff of the flying schools and charter flying services in the Maritimes are veterans; 2. Over 90% of these operators are operating at an annual loss, as verified in annual statements to the Air Transport Board; 3. Already in view of this, several of these operators have been forced to go out of business; 4. Each of these operators performs a meritorious service to their respective communities; 5. The pilots trained by these operators form a basis of partially trained aircrew in the event of further hostilities and are thus an asset to their country when it is remembered that the nucleus of the famous BCATP was these very men themselves... 6. The Government paid, prior to the Second World War, a bonus on every pilot turned out by the flying clubs.

"Be it therefore resolved that the Canadian Government give their immediate attention to this problem before nearly all small operators are forced out of business and before flying training becomes stagnant in Canada and immediately allocate to these operators such revenue items as air mail, feeder service to small communities, coastal ice patrols, reforestation seeding, mosquito marsh spraying, aerial ambulance service and such other projects as may bring a guaranteed revenue to the operator as well as fill a needed service to the public. In addition, the Government should immediately reinstate a grant to each operator for every pilot trained to the status of a privately licensed pilot."

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