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The Development of Air Transport as an Imperial Link.

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In the post-war years, imperial unity will be essential if the peace is to be lasting. Dissension among the British Commonwealth of Nations would lower the prestige of Britain in the eyes of the world, and, consequently, her influence both with her allies and her former enemies would be diminished. Unity can only be attained by understanding. Understanding can only be attained by close contact between the nations. It is in this connection that the aeroplane is so important. The speed with which representatives can meet together and discuss their differences of opinion, over distances which, before the advent of the passenger-carrying aeroplane took four or five weeks, is one of the miracles of modern science. Take Mr. Churchill for example. Washington, Gibraltar, Turkey, Libya — in a few weeks he has travelled thousands of miles and, should he wish it, he could travel to the four corners of the earth if he used an aeroplane. Mr. Churchill can hold the allies together by his lightning trips by air; after the war, when the perils have been greatly diminished, could not the same thing be done, but with a different motive; not to win the war, but to win the peace? Instead of America, North Africa and Turkey could not the British Prime Minister, or a representative of the crown fly to New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and India?

India — the seat of unrest and rebellion. Can her problems be aided by the aeroplane? Gandhi demands independence, Britain feels that she has to safeguard the religious sects which, even combined, are outnumbered by the Hindus; can the aeroplane help in any way, either by linking India with the

other nations of the British Commonwealth, or by forming a stronger bond with the motherland? In my opinion the answer is definitely yes! Missionaries should be sent to India as quickly as possible, and as many as possible, for I believe that the only solution to India's problems is for her to become a Christian country. It would be no use telling the Hindus and Mahomedans, "You become Christians and we will make you independent," for this would be blackmail and would do more harm than good. Speed in this matter is essential, for the Hindus will not stop agitating while an attempt is being made to undermine the foundations of their religion. The aeroplane can, and must, help to solve India's many problems.

I doubt if the aeroplane will ever be used for the transport of bulk in preference to ships. However some of the difficulties which stand in the way of complete aerial transport could be removed by the use of dehydration. This method of reducing bulk to a comparatively small size has been developed a great deal during this war and we hope that, after the fighting is over, the scientific research in this respect will not be abandoned.

Another use to which air transport can be put is that of carrying medical supplies to outposts. Just recently, on a tiny island in the Pacific, an outbreak of cholera occurred. The local witch-doctor was powerless, medical aid, as we no it, was non-existent, so one of the natives rowed out and contacted a tiny fishing boat. This boat immediately left its position and soon met a larger fishing boat which had a wireless. So to the nearest medical supply base nearly a hundred miles away came the urgent cry for help. An aeroplane was chartered and two doctors, with the necessary equipment flew to the infected island, where no aeroplane had ever been seen before. Here the doctors swiftly took charge and the population of this tiny island owed its existence to an aeroplane. Disease, the common enemy of mankind, can be fought, not only by doctors, but by aeroplanes.

If air transport is to be developed and increased, bigger and better airfields must be built. The building and upkeep of these new airfields will require labour. Thus could the unemployment problem be assisted. In the building of the new aeroplanes, the skilled workers who have been turning out Lancasters and Spitfires will be able to change to larger transport planes, carrying cargoes of peace instead of munitions of war. The technical objections against larger planes may be insuperable, if so, more, but smaller, planes must be built. The limited carrying space on an aeroplane prevents much heavy cargo from being carried, but air-mail before the war was quite popular, and, after the war, we hope that this means of communication may be increased, so that a letter from New Zealand could reach England in a week. Air-mail could play a very important part in linking the peoples of the dominions together.

Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, four self-governing dominions with the crown as the only concrete link, but with ties of relationship with the motherland, which can never be broken, but which can be strengthened by speedy communication, better understanding, and more frequent imperial conferences, and with the help of the aeroplane we hope that we may remain an

"empire over which the sun never sets."

Rudyard
Kipling.

Books consulted. Encyclopaedia Britannica

Government records for 1940, 1941, 1942.

History of Aviation.

Perils of the Air.