

CORRESPONDENCE

The following have been received in answer to Mr. A. D. Baxter's article in the March 1966 Journal.

I AGREE absolutely with two major functions set out for the JOURNAL to fulfil. The first function, that of upholding the learned reputation of the Society, would appear to be carried out extremely well through the lectures and papers published. It is in the second function, the rapid dissemination of technical matters of current importance and interest, where I feel the JOURNAL's record becomes a little dismal.

A survey of the Technical Notes published in the past four relevant issues of the JOURNAL reveals an average time from first receipt of manuscript to publication of some five months, with a spread of from one to ten months. If due account is taken of time for authors' revisions, the average time to publication still remains at over four months. When one considers the situation of our trans-Atlantic counterpart in the AIAA, it is found that although average publication times turn out to be very similar (just less actually), there is a very much reduced spread, and the AIAA anyway produces several journals *each one* containing a number of Technical Comments almost an order of magnitude greater than that published in the JOURNAL.

The "current knowledge dissemination rate" of the Royal Aeronautical Society compares therefore, very unfavourably indeed with that of the AIAA. Thus, if one happens to be working in a rapidly moving research area, it can actually be a positive disadvantage to an author to submit his Technical Notes to the JOURNAL for publication.

One recognises that the Royal Aeronautical Society cannot match, on financial grounds alone, the production of the AIAA, but if the JOURNAL is to fulfil the second of its stated functions, then surely a more vigorous approach to and expansion of, the Technical Notes section is called for. No article which is ten months before a publications committee can be called "current" when related to the present rates of advance.

G. J. STURGESS (*Graduate*)
23rd March 1966

I THINK it is right that the Society should foster discussion of all matters concerning the aircraft industry. The question for the Society's *second* century is how we can make the industry sufficiently flexible and efficient so that it will thrive rather than merely survive. Everyone in the industry is virtually concerned about this, and the activities of the Society give an opportunity to those normally in "the back room" to canvass their ideas.

I doubt if anyone would disagree that the need is to ensure that each project the industry undertakes

- (a) is studied in great detail and compared with alternatives before any metal is cut, to ensure that the main engineering problems have been foreseen and can be overcome;
- (b) represents a sufficient step forward to ensure a reasonable production run;
- (c) is of a construction that is easy and cheap to produce and, at the same time, increasingly reliable.

I venture to suggest that far too much of the design and development work is carried through by the experience and judgment of senior men, and far too little attention is paid to the possibilities of eliminating crises long before they occur. Of course the experience and judgment of these people is vital, and of course some attention is given to bringing science and computers to bear. (I myself am employed by an engine company on the science and computers aspect, and am now given much encouragement). However, I find it very sad how limited is the general vision of what is now possible.

I believe if the effort in basic research and computing in the industry is sufficiently expanded and well directed it

will be possible to expect projects to work straight from the drawing board in five to ten years' time. The effect that this would have on development time and cost hardly needs stating. Such a break-through would also make the industry far less liable to government cancellations.

I would imagine the Society playing a decisive role. Collaboration and advisory committees are already legion, but these do not have their deliberations widely publicised, and interchange of ideas between these bodies is not automatic. More important, the Society has the ear of senior management which these bodies do not necessarily have. It may be that the research and computing should be organised by a national body like the Council's proposed "Aerospace Planning Authority", but there are obvious disadvantages in not having the science in the industry itself.

P. E. HUBBLE (*Associate Fellow*)
28th March 1966

THE editorial in the March JOURNAL seems to me admirably timed and deserves to provoke a wide response. Most of the criticism I feel constrained to advance is less of the JOURNAL, than of the Society.

It seems to me the Society does an admirable job in ventilating the engineering side of the art and science of aeronautics, but that it has failed utterly in the task of examining what, for want of a better word, may be described as the operational aspects. Certainly there are occasional forays into this field but the results seem to me at least to have been invariably disappointing, mainly because the debates have been poorly organised and the Society appears to lack in this field the sense of purpose that motivates its members on engineering matters. In short, the Society's activities hold more interest for aircraft constructors than for aircraft users, for designers more than for pilots, for engineers more than for navigators or air traffic controllers.

A further impression is that perhaps unconsciously the Society has created its own form of Establishment that only accepts and acts on the criticisms with which it agrees. At the recent meeting on the Plowden Report I found the first hour or so of the talks rather boring. Surely there was no need to waste so much of the limited time available on reports of committee work that could have been circulated in advance. However, I thought the later discussion quite exhilarating and exemplary of what the Society is capable of generating, both in its own and the national interest, if its energies are suitably directed.

In the current edition of the JOURNAL (March 1966) are several articles that illustrate my point. Everbody who attended the discussion on 4th November last (*Relationships Between Government and Aeronautics*) must have concluded as I did that our French and Swedish friends are much more sensible than we have been in managing their aircraft industry. Does the Society propose any changes or plan to make any recommendations to the Government? I completely disagree with statements such as that made at the Plowden Report meeting to the effect that the Society must learn to live with some of the thoroughly out-of-date practices in our Governmental financial control methods. Surely we should press for changes if we believe they are necessary if we are to achieve the purposes expressed in our charter.

Sir Frederick Tymms' admirable contribution is largely historical, but does refer finally to the chaotic international situation on control and financing of aeronautical services. Does the Society have any views on how a solution might be found to a defect that is having tremendous repercussions throughout the air transport industry?