

(b) For the settlement of the amount to be set aside annually by the Board to the reserve fund :

(c) For the disposal of annual surpluses which may accrue in the future.

It was also agreed that a clearer definition should be made of the relations between the Board and the partner Governments.

Full details are being published.*

XVI. IMPERIAL AIR COMMUNICATIONS.

An interesting discussion on Imperial air communications took place at the tenth meeting of the Conference on the 28th October, when statements were made regarding the progress achieved in civil aviation in the various parts of the British Empire. The Conference was deeply impressed with the great possibilities offered by the development of Imperial air communications and their importance from the political as well as the economic point of view.

The Secretary of State for Air in an opening statement outlined the policy which was being pursued by His Majesty's Government in Great Britain for the development of civil aviation. The ultimate objective of this policy was to bring the most distant parts of the Empire within a fortnight's journey of London, and in the first instance he suggested that it would be advisable to concentrate on two main routes—namely, from England to Australia and South Africa respectively. The first links in these routes were being forged by the Cairo—Karachi and Khartoum—Kisumu services, which were to come into operation in 1927. Sir Samuel Hoare suggested that these links might be extended by service flights to be undertaken by the Royal Air Force and the Australian and South African Air Forces in co-operation, whilst generally, having regard to financial limitations, the best prospect of progress appeared to lie in each of the countries of the Empire undertaking responsibility for developing the sections lying within its own territory, and so gradually building up (on what might be called a mosaic plan) a complete system of Imperial air routes. He also drew attention to the great potentialities of the airship as providing a safe, comfortable, and rapid means of non-stop transport over long distances, aeroplanes being ultimately more suitable for comparatively short-distance flights. Sir Samuel Hoare stated that His Majesty's Government in Great Britain would probably be ready to undertake airship demonstration flights to the Dominions and India in about two years' time, and inquired whether the latter would be prepared to co-operate by providing mooring masts and the organization for procuring the essential meteorological information.†

The representatives of the oversea parts of the Empire expressed their readiness to give immediate and sympathetic consideration to these suggestions ; and the matter was referred to a special sub-committee under the chairmanship of Sir Samuel Hoare for examination in detail.

This sub-committee, after reviewing the present state of air communications in the various parts of the Empire and considering what concrete steps can be taken to further the development of Imperial air services in the immediate future, reported their conviction that the development of Imperial air communications, both by airship and by aeroplane, is of sufficient importance to merit the early and continuous attention of the Government of the several parts of the Empire, and accordingly recommended that the Imperial Conference should place on record the following resolutions :—

“ The Imperial Conference, being impressed with the great benefits, both political and commercial, to be derived from the speeding up of Imperial communications by air—

(1) Takes note with satisfaction—

(a) Of the prospective opening of a regular air service between Cairo and Karachi, and an experimental service between Khartoum and Kisumu ;

* See Appendix IX. † A memorandum prepared for the Imperial Conference by the Secretary of State for Air, entitled “ The Approach towards a System of Imperial Air Communications,” is being published separately.