

THE BILL was read a second time.

HEAVY BOMBING AIRCRAFT

735 ALLEGED BRITISH 740 DEFICIENCIES

The EARL of HALSBURY asked the Government how many types of heavy bomber were included in the Government programme, the number of such bombers ordered, their speed, range, and load-weight of bombs, the dates on which deliveries were expected; and moved for papers.

The noble earl said that he had found from experience that if he wanted to know anything about what was going on in regard to British rearmament in the air he could get that information more expeditiously and more accurately abroad than in this country. Therefore he had no fear, in putting down the question, that there could be any feeling in the Government that they could possibly be telling any of the Air Staffs of Europe something that they did not know quite well already. On the other hand, he could understand that there might be some feeling in the Government's mind that they did not want to let the people of this country know the lamentable state that we were in.

The heavy bomber was the striking force of every air service. The strongest air force in Europe at present was probably that of Italy, where they had improved enormously in a very short time. They had had a very wonderful organization of aero-dynamic laboratories where they had been doing experiments. They had a machine with a range of 2,000 miles, a top speed of 273 miles an hour, and a capacity for carrying a ton and a half of bombs. France had a bomber with a range of 2,480 miles, a top speed of 242 miles an hour, and a ton of bombs. Germany possessed a machine with a range of 1,200 miles, a top speed of 304 miles, and about three-quarters of a ton of bombs.