

The discussion on the subject of the House of Commons later this week with the advantage of the preliminary and detailed statements made on Thursday by SIR KINGSLEY WOOD and SIR THOMAS INSKIP; and it must be hoped that they will attract a better audience than the handful of M.P.s who took the trouble to listen on that occasion to statements of progress achieved and foreshadowed. Those statements, particularly that of the SECRETARY OF STATE for AIR, were of the first importance. They dealt with subjects with which the country has expressed the deepest concern. It is true that last Thursday's debate did not end, and was not expected to end, with a division, and that there has been time to read it before the subject is resumed. But Ministers struggling with great difficulties, not the least of which is the impossibility of combining the disclosure of the full facts with regard for the public interest, have a right to expect that support, from those who do support them, should be shown by something more than attendance for a few minutes in the division lobbies.

Last Thursday they had plenty to say. Most of the House of Commons missed nothing less than a full account of how far the defects in our air armaments, and in the system of supply which nourishes them, have been made good since last May, when member after member in a crowded House analysed past errors and welcomed the changes designed to remedy them. The scale and the scope of SIR KINGSLEY WOOD'S activities during the past six months would certainly have impressed the critics of those days if they had been there to hear. What has been done is to enlist industry far more amply and closely with the business of supply. Business and industrial experience has been called in to "fill responsible posts" in the Air Ministry. The supply of labour has been greatly improved, and has increased by 15 per cent. in the last two months alone. Much of the red tape which fettered production has been cut out. No fewer than 3,500 firms are employed on subcontracting work. The results of these changes are that output has already increased by 50 per cent. and before next May will have increased by 150 per cent. The 1937 programme of 1,750 first-line aircraft in home squadrons will be complete by next March; the 1938 programme of 2,370 first-line aircraft at home will be completed by 1940, together with the 500 first-line aircraft for overseas, the provision for the expanded Fleet Air Arm, and the balloon barrage not merely for London but for twelve of the largest provincial cities. A considerably enlarged programme, of which no numerical details were given, will be completed by 1941. The financial result will be Air Estimates next year amounting to £200,000,000, seven times as much as three years ago.

Important also was SIR KINGSLEY WOOD'S abandonment of the principle of numerical parity, which was the usual interpretation of LORD BALDWIN'S pledge that we should have an air force equal to that of any country within striking distance of our shores. The goal now substituted is that of having an air force adequate for our strategical necessities, and the more purely defensive turn given to our air policy is shown by the decision to switch the preponderance of orders from bombers to fighters, and to concentrate more upon providing reserves in depth behind the first-line material. There has never been much to be said in favour of setting up some numerical criterion of air power, particularly when the standard of measurement can only be guessed, and has frequently been guessed wrongly. But the House of Commons will certainly want to know that this new definition does not mean any weakening in the policy of the most effective possible expansion of British power in the air.

## GERMANY'S AIR STRENGTH

### ITALIAN EVIDENCE

"6,000 MACHINES BY 1940"

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

BERLIN, OCT. 25

The numerical strength of the German Air Force—a subject hitherto banned in the German Press—is touched upon by the *National-Zeitung* of Essen, a newspaper with particularly close connexion with Field-Marshal Göring, the Air Minister. It does not give figures from German sources, but quotes and does not dispute figures given by an Italian expert, Signor Mario Muratori, in the periodical *L'Ala d'Italia*.

According to Signor Muratori the front line strength of the German Air Force is 3,000, and that, on the basis of the current construction programme, it will be 6,000 in 1940-41. By contrast the French front line strength will then be only 3,000, and the British much the same.

In ground organization also (Signor Muratori says) Germany has a long lead, having 750 aerodromes against some 250 in France and 260 in Great Britain.

The German Air Force, states the newspaper, "will keep its nose in front."

## ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING

### TWO SEPARATE PROBLEMS

#### CASE FOR A COMPULSORY REGISTER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Sir Auckland Geddes will, I have no doubt, deal more effectively than I can with the many conundrums "Civilian" has propounded in his letter headed "Compulsory Service" in to-day's issue of *The Times*. Will you permit me, however, to beg "Civilian" to discriminate clearly in his mind between national organization for war and national training for war. The first is indispensable as a precautionary measure for every nation, no matter what its situation or its form of government. Provided our organization is sound, the second can be adapted to circumstances as they arise.

Without compulsion as its basis national organization for war remains farcical. Every man, woman, and child needs to be told definitely what he or she is to do in an emergency, and not merely be asked what he or she would like to do.

In August, 1914, we had no semblance of national organization for war, and even by 1918 all we had were mere improvised makeshift arrangements. If to-morrow we start organizing on the right lines years will still elapse before our position will be sound. National training, on the other hand, as we learnt from 1914-18, can be effected under pressure in a few months, and the period of training will be shorter in proportion as adequate preparations have been made beforehand under a rational scheme of national organization.

Believe me your obedient servant,  
GERALD F. ELLISON, Lieut.-General.  
Canons House, Taunton, Nov. 10.