

APPENDIX III.

REPORT OF THE IMPERIAL AIR COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE.

Members of the Committee :

CAPTAIN THE RT. HON. F. E. GUEST, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.P., Secretary of State for Air (Chairman).

LORD GORELL, C.B.E., M.C., Under-Secretary of State for Air.

AIR-MARSHAL SIR H. M. TRENCHARD, Bt., K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Air Staff.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR F. H. SYKES, G.B.E., K.C.B., C.M.G., Controller-General of Civil Aviation.

SIR G. L. BARSTOW, K.C.B., representing H.M. Treasury.

SIR JAMES STEVENSON, Bt., representing the Colonial Office.

J. H. LOVELL, Esq., representing the India Office.

SIR ROSS SMITH, K.B.E., representing Australia and New Zealand.

COLONEL THE HON. H. MENTZ, representing South Africa.

L. V. MEADOWCROFT, Esq., Secretary.

PREFATORY.

1. IN accordance with the decision of the special Conference of Prime Ministers, we have met as a committee with the following terms of reference :—

To report—

(i.) On the cost of erecting masts, providing bases and fuel-supplies, upkeep of, commissioning, and operating the existing fleet of airships for the purpose of Imperial air communications, with special reference to the routes between England, India, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand ; and

(ii.) On services by means of aeroplanes.

2. The Committee have held four meetings at the Air Ministry, and have had under consideration the detailed estimates submitted by the Controller-General of Civil Aviation, as well as estimates comprised in certain schemes promoted by private individuals.

3. The Committee feel it essential to state in the first place that although the existing fleet of four airships, when put in commission, will enable a scheme of Imperial communications to be begun, it is insufficient to enable a complete scheme to be developed. Of the existing fleet, only L 71 is of dimensions which enable her to make flights to Egypt carrying a commercial load without the necessity for refuelling, and in consequence the performance of this airship alone can be regarded as suitable for regularity of service on long-distance flights. The development of a complete scheme will necessarily entail in due course a constructional programme of airships specifically designed for the distances and the commercial needs of the service. Moreover, in having regard to the requirements of a regular service by means of the existing fleet, regard must be paid to the possibility of accident putting one or more of the airships out of commission for at least a number of weeks. The Committee feel that they would not be fulfilling their responsibility if in reporting upon their first term of reference they failed to draw the attention of the Imperial Conference to these material facts before entering upon the possibilities and cost of utilization of the existing fleet.

4. The Committee think it desirable at the outset to explain the hypothesis upon which the estimates contained in this report have been compiled. If it be decided that further efforts should be made to develop Imperial air communications, the alternatives are to proceed either (a) by Government action, or (b) by leaving the development of air communications to private enterprise (with or without a Government subsidy).

5. In the estimates submitted in the first part of this report the Committee have assumed the adoption—for the present at any rate—of a scheme of develop-