

Correspondence

Industrial Training Act/Civil Air Transport Training Board

THE Society of Licensed Aircraft Engineers and Technologists were, of course, interested to read the letter in the July issue from Messrs. J. M. Rainbow and G. D. Peacock, on the above subject, in which particular attention was drawn to the need for a complete appraisal of the present-day trade structure and its applicability to present-day requirements, and also to cover future developments.

This letter also said "This analysis should be carried out by a team of experts who are not biased and are not actively employed by the company whose work is being examined" and "the present non-related certificates and diplomas should be replaced by a national standard recognised by the Air Registration Board".

In the September issue there are letters from Mr. R. A. Fry and Mr. John H. Cox, on this same subject of Civil Air Transport Training and proper qualifications. Reference is made in both letters to the Associate Membership Examinations of the SLAET.

Here is a ready-made "national standard recognised by the Air Registration Board", and the Society's Central Examining Authority (Chairman, Air Commodore Sir Vernon Brown) have since 1956 kept these examinations in touch with the rapid development in the aviation industry, and are now exploiting the Syllabus more fully to provide for the higher academic levels currently in demand.

Perhaps it may be a little immodest to make a further claim, but why not make use of the facilities of the SLAET to provide "the team of experts who are not biased . . ."

In July 1964, the SLAET advised the Ministry of Labour of its interest in the implications of the Industrial Training Act; it is now waiting to play its part.

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Secretary General, The Society of Licensed Aircraft Engineers and Technologists.
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THE letter by Messrs Rainbow and Peacock in the July 1966 issue, entitled "The Industrial Training Act", is permeated by an assumption that the Training Board will have "a strong Corporation and Trade Union flavour" and that this will lead inevitably to an unwieldy training machine teaching an inappropriate and out-of-date syllabus. Based on these assumptions, the letter then proceeds to argue for independent analysis of the training need and a type of training that will lead to a more efficient air transport system in the future. No evidence is offered for either assumption, indeed the operative words in paragraph 3 are "We assume, and are informed" (without mentioning by whom).

In fact, the Board's composition allows for a maximum employers' representation of 38%.

The employees' interests would be served by Trade Union officials, who are more progressive than perhaps the writers realise, and who will doubtless do something to ensure that the training facilities provided for and standards achieved by their members are kept in line with, or perhaps in advance of, the actual requirements for the job they have to do.

The third constituent of the Board, the educationalists, are perhaps the key to the situation, because their terms of reference include not only the impartial responsibility of relating training to real needs, but also the guidance to training establishments as to how this should be achieved, and why.

From the point of view of constitution, therefore, there is some reason to think that a fair cross-section of interests has been provided. One has to recognise, however, that apart from the basic training of an apprentice, follow-up training will be needed at frequent intervals during his career due to the breadth of technical knowledge now involved in aircraft maintenance and the pace at which it is developing. This introduces an element not referred to

in the letter—the progressive retraining of Aircraft Engineers and Technicians with which the Board will be intimately concerned, and which accounts for an equal, if not greater, proportion of total engineering training costs. It is wrong to assume that the Board's activity will follow the same time-scale as the ETB, which so far has devoted its major effort to apprentice training. With relatively small numbers to deal with, the Board for Civil Air Transport may be able to consider the Technician, Supervisory and even Management training levels within a relatively short time.

The basic criticisms of inertia stemming from Corporation "domination" are not well informed. John Cox's excellent letter on "Airline Engineering Apprentice Training" in the September issue does much to dispel this illusion, and furthermore his reference to City and Guilds Courses 171 and 175 provides an opportunity to comment that the appeal for a broader based training for apprentices, made in the letter under review, is already coming into being. Parts I of 171 and 175 are on the way out, and 371 is emerging as a development from these well-tried courses. Its significant features are a strong "operational flavour" while still retaining sufficient attention to basic engineering practice to satisfy the needs of first year apprenticeship, and a coalescence of mechanical and electrical technology and practice in a form which modern aircraft demand. The Syllabus Sub-Committee did have Corporation representatives. And the Advisory Committee, which ratified it, included the Colleges in its formation.

The Airways Corporations have certainly had a say in developments so far. But it is doubtful whether this has had any influence inimical to the production of a Syllabus realistically related to the needs of modern aircraft maintenance. In BEA the post of Engineering Training Manager has been held in turn for a limited period by Senior Managers, who bring to the job an intimate knowledge of the operating needs of Airline maintenance. The present system is largely the creation of two men who are now in charge of BEA's overhaul workshops and aircraft servicing and maintenance respectively. In these present posts, they are incessantly demanding the services of the graduates from the system they helped to create.

It is all very well to say, as Messrs Rainbow and Peacock do, that modern maintenance is by replacement. This is certainly a potted description of a pattern which keeps aircraft in the air, but it begs the whole question of the organisation which is needed to support the technique economically. No airline which does not control its own overhaul and repair circuits will achieve the economy, safety and reliability needed in a large-scale operation. It is our experience and that of all major operators that extensive "repair by rework" is a vital part of such an undertaking. The effective management of the resulting complex requires a steady supply of recruits in appropriate numbers at graduate, technician and trade levels. This is what the Corporations have been developing, the first priority having been given to the technicians, who are now supplemented by the first group of graduates to complete their course.

In planning ahead, it is necessary to think big enough, and this demands development of the whole range of technical and management skills needed to run the transport system of the future, which will be huge by present standards. If it is also to be efficient it must be manned by engineers with the necessary breadth of education and experience to understand the fundamentals of the machines and the system they are controlling and operating.

So perhaps the setting up of yet another forum is not the best move after all. There is enough responsible activity going on to ensure that the Board itself will respond to the real needs of the industry and act in its best interests. Per-