

Soaring

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The First

NATIONAL GLIDING AND SOARING CONFERENCE

When plans were made last year to hold the 1938 Annual Meeting of the Soaring Society of America in Washington, D. C., rather than in New York City, as in former years, there was no little opposition to the idea and quite a few misgivings as to the number of members who would attend. Final plans for this meeting and the First National Gliding and Soaring Conference were drawn up by William Enyart, Secretary of the National Aeronautic Association and Richard duPont, our President, in January.

Arriving in Washington five days before the meeting, to take part in a radio broadcast which was the opening gun of the two-day conference, we found a most encouraging spirit of cooperation in all the Government agencies, which had already been approached by the Washington Committee on Arrangements. Meeting the various members of the Committee, as well as high officials in the Government, we found not only a real interest in gliding and soaring, but also a genuine desire to help stimulate the growth of the sport.

In attempting to arrive at a figure of possible number of delegates to the Conference for making arrangements for the luncheon, transportation and various meetings, we based our preliminary estimates on the somewhat pessimistic attitude voiced at the first mention of changing the location. We had heard from only a bare dozen who had planned to attend. However, soon after the opening of registration on Friday afternoon, it became apparent that there was not only going to be an encouraging turn-out, but that the delegates would consist of a very representative cross section of the most active groups in the country. By noon of the following day, a total of 68 members had registered. At the luncheon on Saturday, including our distinguished guests and speakers, 76 persons were seated.

If this were not encouragement enough, there was a turn-out of several hundred people at Bolling Field that afternoon to see the scheduled sailplane demonstration, despite the fact of very bad weather, with the clouds hanging only 400 feet above the field and icing conditions prevalent. Although the airplane tow had to be cancelled, the two auto tow flights made with the Göppingen Wolf, kindly lent for the occasion by T. Wistar Brown, of Philadelphia, created considerable interest, particularly among the Army officers, who were our hosts.

Another extremely encouraging aspect of the Conference was the attendance of twenty-six delegates at the special discussion of glider design and construction led by Dr. Eastman Jacobs, of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Present throughout this meeting was the Director of the N.A.C.A., Dr. George Lewis, who showed considerable interest in the discussion on new designs now being built, and possible designs of the near future.

The closing event of the two-day Conference was the tour of the aeronautical exhibits at the Smithsonian Museum, led by Mr. Paul Garber, Director of Aeronautics for the National Museum. His fascinating lecture, as well as the incomparable collection of motorless heavier-than-air exhibits, made this an unforgettable occasion, which was a fitting conclusion to the Conference. One of our most active members from the Middlewest expressed, at its conclusion, that this had been the most interesting and valuable day he had spent in many years.

Although this enthusiastic opinion was not held by all the delegates, we feel that the greater majority of them thought that the decision to move to Washington this year had been a wise one. They had all had an opportunity to meet and hear heads of the various government departments which can do most to help them.

The minority group of dissenters apparently felt dissatisfied over the distribution of prize money at the National Contest this year. This may have been due, in part, to the fact that it would be a hardship for them to travel as far as Frankfort, Michigan, for the contest particularly suitable for their type of craft. However, be that as it may, we are afraid that those who are complaining do not quite realize the situation as it is today. If they had been present at the Annual Directors' Meet-

(Continued on Page 7)

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