



The Commercial Cargo Glider

By Richard H. Rush

EVER since Richard C. du Pont conceived the idea a number of years ago of picking up gliders by means of the All American system, the commercial cargo glider has come nearer and nearer to being an actuality. There has been considerable speculation as to whether such an operation would have any cost advantage as compared with the airplane. Both sides of the question have been argued with probably the weight of argument being on the side of the airplane. Opinion seems to be that for a given amount of power it is aerodynamically more efficient to have all of the capacity in the plane rather than have a part in the plane and the rest dragging behind at the end of ropes. In addition to this alleged cost disadvantage, it is pointed out that each glider has to have its own pilot, and the pick-up device costs something.

Such speculation, it is believed, is to a great extent beside the point. The cargo glider need not out-perform the airplane aerodynamically. All that is necessary is that any cost disadvantages of the glider are not so

great as to offset its operational advantages over the airplane. The justification of the cargo glider rests on its operational advantages over the plane as well as over surface carriers.

Operational Advantages of the Cargo Glider

There are three possible advantages in this type operation:

1. Overall shipping costs which are under those of carrying freight by surface carrier and by plane.
2. Overall speed which is comparable with that of planes where speed is of some advantage—either in the carrying of items whose quality will undergo less deterioration because of rapid transportation, (such as fresh fruits and vegetables) or items, the urgency for which is great (such as industrial machine parts).
3. Transportation made possible by the picked up cargo glider where no air transportation, or in