

(b) They were to be used only to do research work on lines agreed with the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

(c) They will not be given a full C. of A., and only a few guinea pigs will be permitted to fly them and will have to be charged for doing so.

(d) The clubs will have to pay for their insurance.

Even loaning the aircraft was fraught with such difficulties as to be unworkable, and eventually it was agreed that the B.G.A. should be able to purchase the machines outright.

That there is plenty of important meteorological and aerodynamic research work waiting to be done on, and by, gliders, has always been recognized, and even before the offer of the loan of these machines, the B.G.A. was forming a Research Committee, which has drawn up a most comprehensive and detailed plan of research.

This, then, is the extent of the "assistance" which the Government has given. Now let us look again at the subsidy question. It has been stated that the clubs rendered no contribution to defence, but the facts given earlier disprove this. The Government are already paying the A.T.C. more, in order to attain less. It is probably true that the direct benefits to defence alone are difficult to analyse, but the fact that the club equipment and personnel were used in the development of Service gliding is evidence of value many times greater than the small Government subsidy granted.

The effect of the lack of subsidy, and complete negation of assistance given by the Government, is already beginning to appear. The little money that the clubs have accumulated is being used for rent, wages, etc., whilst it is not possible to make more than a nominal income.

Membership, and therefore subscriptions, cannot be increased, as sufficient aircraft are not available to justify this, and the income from the one or two gliders is useless when the upkeep of the site and equipment is considered, together with the money and energy spent in getting a site going at all. Transport and petrol difficulties add to loss of income by frequently preventing the few hours' flying otherwise possible on Summer evenings. Residential courses cannot be contemplated.

Not content with forcing, and this is not too strong a word, a small but vital activity and industry to its knees, from the progressive concern that it was in 1939, the Government has added a further blow. Against the express views of the British controlling body, the minimum age at which young people may learn to fly gliders, let alone get a licence without which they may not fly beyond the precincts of the club, has been raised to sixteen.

It used to be fourteen, and not a single accident occurred to any pilot under the age of seventeen or eighteen in Britain, and yet boys of fifteen were flying with considerable skill, even in the National Contests. In the United States the minimum age is fourteen. Many A.T.C. cadets start gliding before they are sixteen, and about 50 have obtained their certificates before reaching this age.

The reason given for this raising of the minimum age, is that people under sixteen are irresponsible. This is contrary to A.T.C. and club findings. Such an arbitrary declaration is ludicrous, while children of any age are allowed to sail on crowded waters, or, worse still, to

cycle without hindrance, in traffic, or on fast highways. It cannot be realized, surely, that the early stages of the pupil's flying career are spent under the close supervision of the instructor, who will not tolerate irresponsible behaviour in the air from pilots of any age, and who guards the club aircraft like a hen its chicks.

Many of the clubs' keenest members and most capable pilots come from people who started in their early teens and became really used to being with and in aircraft in these important years of their lives. It is as foolish to prevent the clubs from training such pupils as it is to prevent them from learning to fly if they are keen enough to want to.

In one year's time the Olympic Games are to be held in this country, and the event organized by Britain. International Gliding Contests will be held at the same time and the B.G.A. must put forward a team to take on all comers. The prospect is little more than laughable. British gliding has at present no aircraft, no money, and no facilities for the necessary practice. Even if the work were started on the competition machines to-day, they could only just be through the competing pilots' hands by the starting day. The 1948 Contest should be in every way an opportunity for this country to show the World that it is not behind in its work towards complete recovery and normalcy.

What's Cooking

(Continued from page 5)

I didn't run into any other gliding activity at Tuscon, El Paso or Wichita Falls, and didn't stop at St. Louis, but it seems that Laister-Kauffmann is not operating. The Air Exhibit at Cleveland disappointed me in the light plane field because of the few new designs and the high prices. No sailplanes were exhibited.

Schweizers' school is closed down for the winter at Elmira, but a gang was flying over the Thanksgiving holidays. Schweizers are building two 22's, their two-place ship.

Steve and Ginny Bennis of Gliding and Soaring Service, Inc. have decided to operate permanently at Sanford, Florida. Last summer they trained some 20 students at Mastic Flight Strip on Long Island and they cleared a runway on top of the ridge at Ellenville, New York. But the super conditions at Sanford have caused them to change their plans and establish a permanent base there. They are in the process of getting G.I. approval for their school and are also offering courses leading to Silver C. Paul Tuntland plans to come back this summer to make an attempt on the single-place altitude record. That nimbus he tangled with last summer has given him ideas.

Charlie Dale plans to build a Screaming Wiener. Gus Raspet et al, are running rate-of-sink tests on various ships and Alexander Lippisch will help design fillets for the TG-4 to increase its performance. This program is underwritten by the SSA.

The country-wide situation is definitely on the upswing with many schools offering full-time instruction this summer. If they have the organization and financial backing to put soaring on its feet, we may look forward to a sound movement with competent professional people at its frontier.