



AVIATION AND AMERICAN YOUTH

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One of our leading aviation magazines, in a timely editorial by one of aviation's noted personalities, Gill Robb Wilson poses the question:

"HAS AMERICAN AVIATION LOST THE AMERICAN BOY?"

Mr. Wilson, editor and publisher of "Flying," of course, knows the answer to the question. If he did not, he would have to go no further than the nearest private airport to get it from the managers and operators, or to consult the records of CAA relative to student permits (which he has done), or to consult the personnel procurement officials of the aircraft industry, or the published facts regarding the number of college undergraduates that are potentials for the aircraft manufacturing industries engineering staffs.

Mr. Wilson also knows that the American boy does not have to be sold aviation, but that interest in flying is inherent, that flying is a natural aspiration of every youngster who can observe the flight of birds and men. Evidence of this is all about us, in our own back yards, in our parks, on the stubble fields beside our highways, and in the shouts of the airport operators to "Get off the field, you're in the way,"—and yes, in the records of the multi-million dollar model industry.

The American boy is not lost to aviation—aviation is lost to the American boy.

When he has fully exploited his skills in designing, constructing and flying models, and turns to the next natural step to find it so far removed from his fondest financial hopes, some one or two of the hundreds of other attractions that are within his means win and hold his interest, and aviation has lost him.

The American aviation industry and the Air Forces, unlike their counterparts of both Western Europe and the Iron Curtain countries, are overlooking (as they have in the past) the potentialities of the one phase of flying that economically could and would sustain the interest of the youth of America in aviation. This phase is motorless flight, — gliding and soaring.

Yankee industrial genius in nearly all fields, except aviation, outstrips Europeans by popularizing products with potential users regardless of methods required or costs. Apparently no thought has been given to this by the aviation industry; in fact, all suggestions and proposals have been rejected. One national aviation organization several years ago strived for a "model plane in every classroom and a glider in every high school." Another also stands ready to furnish leadership with know-how, and the necessary inclination, on a voluntary basis for such a program. Will those whom it will benefit most, the aircraft

manufacturer, suppliers, publications, airlines, airport and fixed base operators and the military seize the opportunity?

In Europe, where the thinking of these people is supposed, by some, to be second to American, an air force that required all the effort of Allied countries of the world five years to conquer, was trained in gliders and sailplanes.

There is every reason to believe that this process of preparing masses of teen-age flyers in Europe is being repeated, on a greatly magnified scale behind the censorship curtain. In fact, it is entirely possible that some reports that we receive from Korea may stem not from the quality of the MIG but from superior piloting ability because of training that began in, and whose proficiency and excellence was developed in sailplanes at the receptive pre-recruiting age. Soaring is peculiarly advantageous in the field of training for jet and other supersonic flight since high-speed, high-altitude craft simulate sailplane characteristics during some maneuvers. In countries not behind the curtains, both governments and industry are taking full advantage of the possibilities of gliding and soaring now as they have in the past. Some governments sponsor the activity by furnishing equipment and instruction to recognized clubs and to colleges; others provide sailplanes for recreational flying at air force bases; some require a minimum of glider hours in training; and some require soaring flights as proficiency maintenance.

Many European aircraft industries are providing loans and grants to clubs and small groups of individuals to encourage the activity permanently. The current contribution is financial support for teams from Britain and the Continent to participate in the coming International Soaring competitions at Madrid. Many of the teams, in fact most, will be able to participate only because part or all of the cost is borne by Government, industry or "Flying Foundations." To date American pilots, who for the first time in history hold four international records, lack necessary assistance and will be unable to make the trip.

This substantial support cannot possibly have the advantages in Europe that it can have in a country where individuals are privileged to and where incomes allow, ownership of aircraft, where Carnets are unheard of, where airports are more numerous than towns and are hungry for activity, where light plane manufacturers are geared to make 35,000 personal aircraft annually and are producing 2,250, and where an Air Force spends untold thousand of dollars to train a young man to fly a trainer, when they could have him, ready for advanced training, for a few hundred dollars.

Now, may I ask a question, and answer it?
Who is sustaining the loss?

THE AMERICAN BOY, — THE AMERICAN AVIATION INDUSTRY — AND THE U.S. AIR FORCE.