

GREAT FALLS DAILY TRIBUNE

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EDITORIAL PAGE

HASKIN LETTER

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN

AERODOPE

Washington, D. C., March 27.—While the flying business stands on the threshold of a wonderful development, awaiting for the government to formulate a policy with regard to the use and manufacture of aircraft, the scientists and experimenters keep steadily at work, opening up new possibilities in this great industry of the future.

Undoubtedly, the most significant thing in the recent development of aeronautics is the rise of the dirigible gas bag. A former article in this paper told of the great development of the captive balloon late in the war and the use of the small dirigible (a sort of miniature "Zep") by the navy department.

After extensive research and experiment, England's civil aviation ministry pronounces the dirigible airship worthy of consideration for commercial purposes, both for passenger and cargo transport, and sets forth the specific advantages of the dirigible over the airplane for commercial traffic in support of its stand.

The departure which so changed the tenor of aircraft progress is the use of helium gas to supplant hydrogen as the filler of the balloon envelope. Hydrogen is easily inflammable; helium is not. With danger of fire almost entirely removed, and with excellent prospects for higher speed and carrying power, the dirigible takes its place at the most practical and adaptable commercial aircraft so far used.

The newest dirigible, now being built by a firm in the mid west, promises a speed of from 100 to 120 miles an hour, and ability to carry some 55,000 pounds of cargo. This new type, known as the "Rigid," is built on different lines from the well known man-sized war dirigible. It has a square envelope, slightly hollowed below, so that the ship may hang close to the bag.

The modern dirigible can remain in the air a week without descending which makes it a practical machine for long distance flights. It can be built to carry passengers under more favorable conditions than the airplane. Fifty passengers, even a hundred, can sail in the dirigible now being built abroad. Steamship quarters, saloons, roof gardens, plants of room to walk about—these are promised aboard the monster airships of the near future.

Just now, in spite of such advances in evolving practical aircraft, there is a temporary but marked slump in aviation. For the four years past practically all the resources and invention expended on aeronautics were expended in the interests of war. Then the war ended unexpectedly, leaving on the hands of our government alone 30,000 pilots, 500,000 aircraft mechanics, and \$800,000,000 worth of military material and equipment.

The government has built up an elaborate system of military aeronautics, but it has no policy whatever for a civil aviation program. Aviators and aviation mechanics discharged from service are forced to seek employment along other lines, for the present at least. Pilots are still required to obtain licenses for flying from the war department. The government still holds on to its \$800,000,000 of motors, spruce, castor oil and other materials.

Until congress defines an aeronautical policy for the country, aviation will continue in its present state of partially suspended animation. If a progressive program is authorized, the golden age of air travel will begin. No signs are interpreted by those who best understand the aeronautical situation.

Whether congress will establish a department of civil aeronautics, with a cabinet officer in charge, or provide for a small aviation bureau in some existing department, or leave the war department to dump its \$800,000,000 worth of aviation goods on the market and into the scrap heap is a matter of wide conjecture. Men interested in flying regard the situation as critical, and say that if congress does nothing to salvage and utilize the military aircraft supplies, aviation will receive a crushing blow.

More official attention has been given to commercial aviation in Europe than in this country. France, Britain, and Italy have ministries of aviation corresponding to our executive departments.

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to their government ownership principles. But the great mass of the people who use railroads do favor such action because their experience is that they got better service for less money under private ownership than they now do under public operation. The conservative element, no small consideration when we come to estimating public opinion and voting strength, are opposed to all government operation of business from principle.

All these factors point to the resumption of private ownership and operation of railroads when the present war authority of the government under which they were taken over ceases, if not before that time. We do not believe, however, that this will solve the railroad problem or settle it by any means. Private ownership has never ceased, to be sure, but it will be a live issue in the future, and it is our judgment that it will be succeeded some time in the future by government ownership and operation, and that the change is inevitable unless human nature changes. Our argument must be familiar to the readers of The Tribune. It is not that government ownership and operation will give us cheaper or better service. At the best it will not be any cheaper or better, and at the worst it may be dearer and less efficient. We base our belief in the speedy coming of government ownership and operation of railroads on the conviction that the public will never consent to the private owners of railroads making profits out of the traffic on a scale that will tempt new capital to invest their money in railroads. We are willing enough to have a new factory, or any ordinary business enterprise that involves capital investment, make ten or fifteen, or twenty per cent profits on such investment to compensate them for the risk of loss. But we are not willing that the railroad investor should make any profits above and over a very moderate interest on his money. Experience of the past has shown that new railroad investments are risky and often involve loss of capital, especially in the first years of such new railroads. No wise investor is going to risk his capital where at best no profits beyond a moderate interest are possible, and at worst his capital may shrink considerably. We need more railroads built. We must have them. We need vastly more equipment and facilities for those already built. We must have them. If the private citizen will not invest his money in these enterprises then the government, or all the people, must do it. When they do that they become owners of railroads, and when the government owns the railroads it will sooner or later have to operate its own property. The railroad problem will not be solved by turning the railroads back to their private owners. It will only be postponed.

PROSPERITY VS. STAGNATION.  
Everybody is talking houses. Everybody says fine and dandy. Everybody declares that Great Falls ought to have two hundred new houses this year and everybody knows it would make a lot of business for the dealers and that would be fine. Everybody catches the idea that it would create a lot of labor for carpenters and add to prosperity.  
Over against this you can find easily one hundred men who have got the money to build a home if they can be persuaded that they can make the investment now and not suffer too much thru the drop in materials hereafter.  
What then is needed?  
The answer is easy. Simply a getting together. The lumbermen should make a fair profit. They have surely traveled a rocky road thru the war. But the time has come for them to sharpen their pencils and just as the steelmen have done with the government arrive at the equitable prices. We think about every prospective buyer is willing to have the lumber dealer make a fair profit.  
Now, then, the dealer in plumbing supplies must follow the example of these same steelmen. The thing needed in reconstruction is volume of business right off the bat. The dealer, if there be any, who is saying I will be content with small sales and long profits hasn't got the idea. He is a disciple of stagnation instead of reconstruction.  
The same line of talk applies to the hardware lines, the concrete and everything else that goes into a house.  
This is exactly the doctrine that the new industrial board at Washington talked to the steelmen—namely: don't make your prices too high; don't make them too low; make them fair—then let's begin reconstruction.  
The contractors ought to be interested in this propaganda. A committee of contractors could find out whether material prices are too high in Great Falls or not. We are not asserting that prices are too high in any line. We are simply indicating what ought to be done if there are dealers in any line who are choosing the big-profit-small-volume road as was found to be the case with some steel manufacturers.  
It will bear repeating—the houses should be built. Let's not sit around all summer while the sky is blue and the grass is green. It will be winter again after a bit.

THE RAILROAD PROBLEM.

The director general of the railroads of the United States recently suggested a plan to crack the particularly refractory nut of railroad ownership and operations. Reduced to simple terms it consists in the government guarantee of a small interest on the money invested in railroads by the private owners, plus a share in any revenue earned by the road above the cost of operation, including the government guaranteed dividend. This, he points out, would insure a minimum profit on the money invested by all railroads, while encouraging them to make more profits by efficient management, because they would share in such additional profits. It would also square itself with the idea put forward by some of the railroad employes of sharing in the profits of the road. The idea of the latter is not, however, to substitute such speculative profits for any portion of their present pay, but to add such profits, if there be any, to their present rate of compensation. In other words, they would be willing to share in profits, but not in losses arising from the operation of the railroads.

It is not our purpose to enter into any discussion of the merits of this suggestion at this time. But it is chiefly interesting to us as indicating a purpose to turn back the railroads to private ownership soon. In fact, all signs point to such action. The proposition of the late director general, Mr. McAdoo, that congress extend the time during which the government may operate the railroads for five years in order to give the people a chance to decide between the merits of private operation and public operation fell on unwilling ears so far as the last congress was concerned. That congress had an administration majority in both branches. If Mr. McAdoo's proposal with the administration to back him could not be put thru the last congress still less can it be put thru the next congress with a republican and anti-administration majority in both branches. The republican party seems to be pretty strongly committed against government operation of railroads. Therefore as a practical proposition we may pretty safely assume that government ownership is not to be thought of at the present time and government operation is also nearing its end.

We are also pretty well satisfied that the return of the railroads to their private owners and their operation by these private owners as proposed by the republicans is the popular thing just now. The railroad employes as a rule do not favor it because they have found it much easier to get wage increases from Uncle Sam than they did from the private owners. The socialists and radicals do not favor it because it runs counter

BET BISMARCK'S GLAD HE'S DEAD.  
(Charleston News and Courier.)  
The Rhine is to be open to all nations.

THE DEMOCRATIC CITY TICKET.  
The democrats of Great Falls put up an usually good ticket for the consideration of the voters of Great Falls this year. It is a business ticket. The men selected are men who have made good in their own business affairs, and who enjoy the confidence of the public in a marked degree. The candidate for mayor, Mr. Newman, announces a business rather than a partisan party policy in case he is elected. We highly approve of that. We have had altogether too much partisan politics in the conduct of our business affairs in the city council in the past. It is the cause of a good deal of our past troubles. Alderman Sullivan some weeks ago in discussing the south side sewer rake-off, voted for by a solid republican party vote in its inception, frankly acknowledged that party politics was to blame for it. It got to be the ordinary and common mode of procedure in the city council for the republican majority to call a party caucus before the session of the council began and to decide in secret session just how each party member was to vote on any matter of importance.

There is really no field for party principles to operate in as far as city government is concerned. It is a business problem rather than a political one. It is a question of spending the taxpayer's money to the best advantage and giving him the most service for the money spent. If all the aldermen on all the tickets held this view of their duty there would be little legitimate partisan argument left for this newspaper, or any partisan leader. As a matter of fact and experience, we know, however, that members of the city council do not always act on such business principles, and they are determined to connect their own party friends with city salaries as a reward of party fealty if they possibly can. That makes it hard for a mayor animated by a desire to give the people a business government where a hostile party majority is ready to block his plans by defeating his nominees for confirmation. We have had several city administrations which started out with good intention wrecked just there. For that reason we advise the voters at the coming city election who have made up their mind that they want such a business administration as Mr. Newman would certainly try to give them to vote for aldermen they feel sure would support him instead of antagonizing him. And that means, of course, the democratic candidates. To elect a man to office and then tie his hands with a hostile party majority is not wisdom or good political sense, though it is done all too frequently in our politics.

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**Widow Will Divide Compensation With Her Mother-in-Law**  
Helena, March 29.—For the first time in the history of the state compensation board, a widow has divided compensation with her mother-in-law. The case is that of A. R. Renegar, colored, working as a switchman for the Anaconda company, at Butte. He was killed August 7, 1918. The widow and Mrs. M. J. Renegar, of Seattle, his mother, will divide the \$4,000 awarded. The board, as the law demands, pays the entire sum to the wife, who has notified the board that she will share it with her mother-in-law.

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**No English Strike; Union Accepts Offer**  
London, March 29.—The delegates to the conference of the national union and railwaymen have decided to accept the offer of the government for the settlement of their demands.

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\$200 for inside lots, Fifth avenue north and Tenth street; \$50 cash, balance \$10 per month. Liberty bonds at par.  
\$2,750 for 7-room house; bath; corner lot; 213 Eleventh street south; \$750 cash will handle.  
No. 916 Eighth avenue north; four rooms; lot 25x150; retail grocery stock also for sale.  
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To rent: Four-room furnished house; lot 50x150; \$50 per month; south side.

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