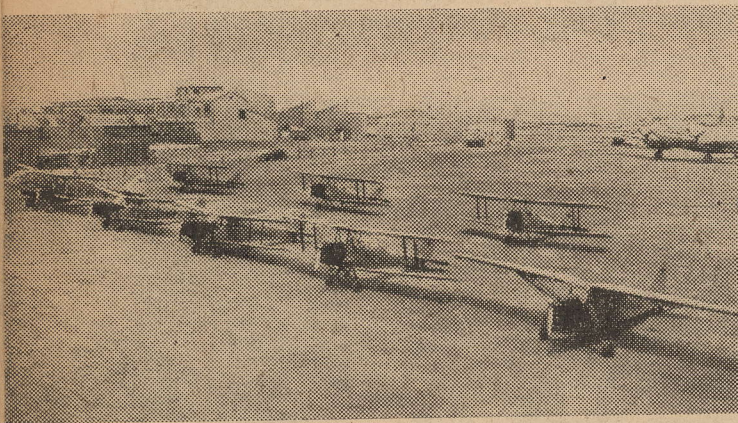
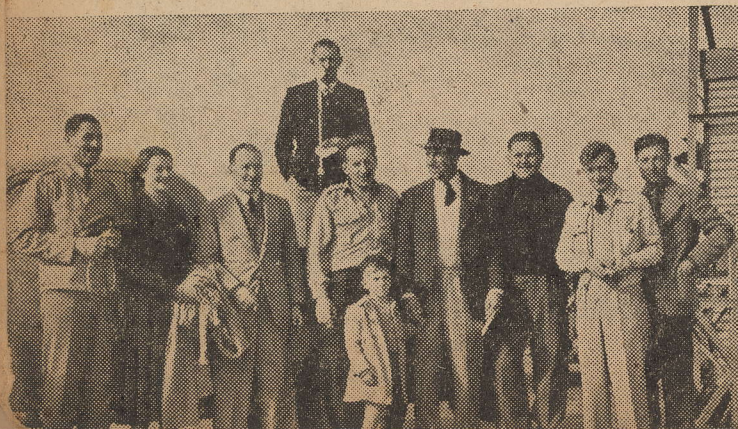




Ex-RAAF pilots have contributed substantially to the week-end flying force of the Royal Aero club of NSW



RAC of NSW aircraft in a line up. They include DH82's 84A's, 85, 87A and B. Below: The Temora committee.



## Where Go the Aero Clubs?

A tour of Australia's major aero clubs talks with club managers and officials and a survey of private flying problems prompts this question.

by STANLEY BROGD

**T**HOUGH the percentage of Australians who fly airliners is greater than that of any other people on this earth, there is another side to the picture. The horrid truth is also that fewer Australians enter into a light plane than any other national—except, probably, Liberians or Libyans.

The basic enemy of the light plane flier in this country is beyond his control. It is simply that the Government forces petrol costs up to 2/9¼ a gallon for 73 octane, which most aviation light plane men use—without a cent of primage it could be sold here for 1/10—and makes too much trouble about importing light planes.

One can point truthfully to the presence of 10,000 light planes in the State of California alone and demonstrate that soda fountain "jerks" fly on their week-ends and garage hands have their own private aircraft. But in the USA, a first-class light plane direct from factory can be bought for £750 and aviation fuel is cheaper than a soft drink.

If the Government really wants light plane flying to progress in this country it should provide dollars and raise import duty on American and other light planes besides providing aviation fuel at a reasonable price.

Unfortunately, neither of these events will occur, for it is a fixed belief in the public mind that only men with expensive habits buy private planes and only mad long-haired youths with a speed complex climb into Tiger Moths for an hour's rip-roaring adventure in the wide blue yonder. Flying to the average voter who does not use the airlines is still a "Brick Bradford" business.

Private flying is paying the price of that attitude. The number of private owners has always been small in Australia, but today the average private owner is wondering how soon he will have to sell his aircraft.

Until the recent successful challenge to petrol rationing regulations the private owner got 5.4 hours' flying a month or 64.8 a year; his every flight is surrounded by restrictions placed on him by a department which still officially regards any light plane pilot as a congenital idiot (not without some reason in certain cases), and his only hope is that someone who understands his problems will some day become a political power in the Government.

#### They Buy It—By The Hour

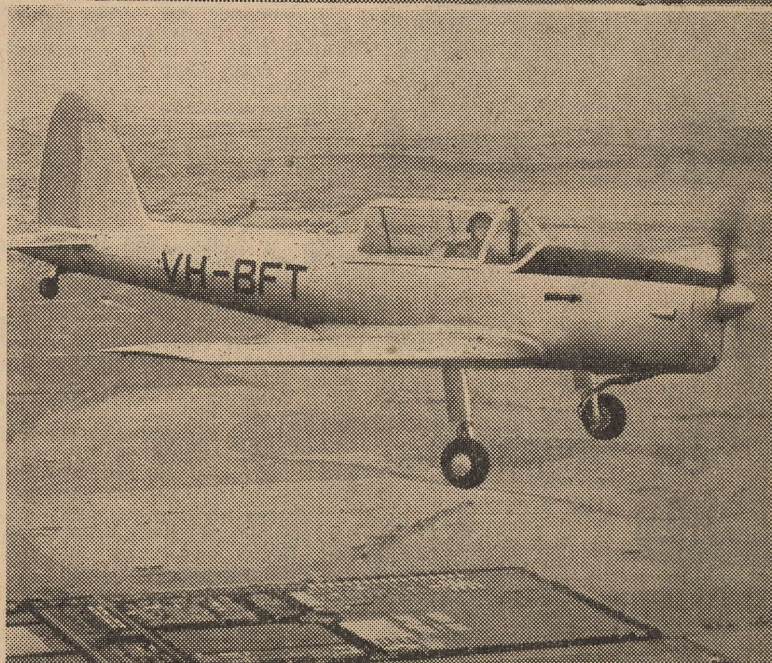
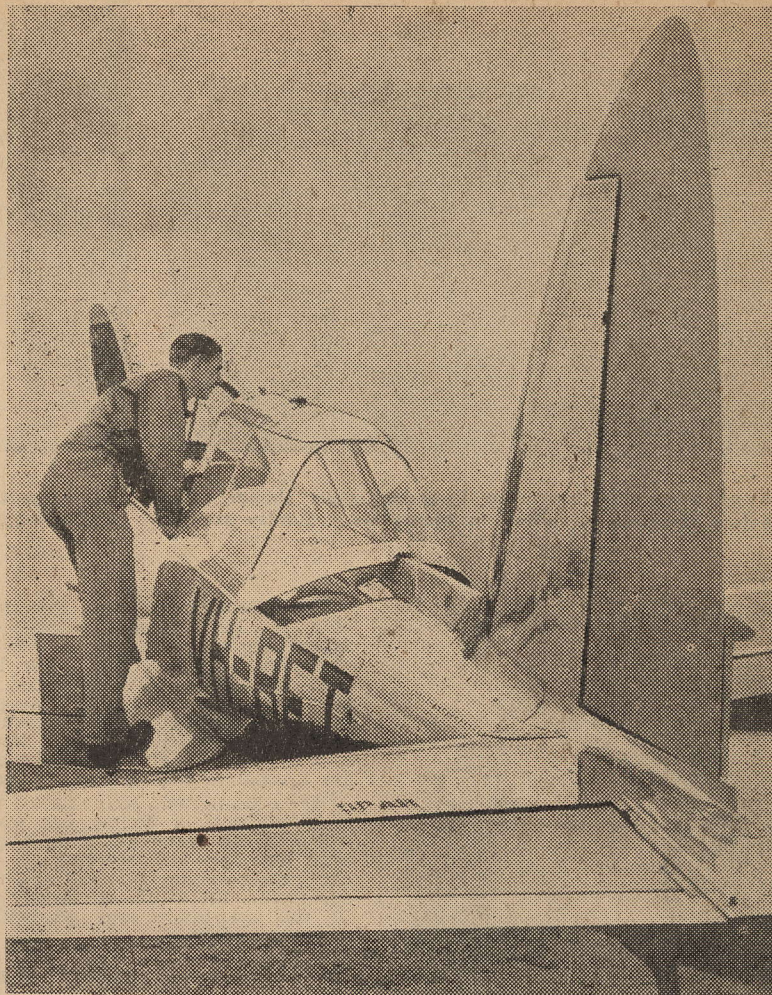
The average man who does any light plane flying in Australia is the fellow who goes to the Aero Club and pays for it by the hour. The Aero Clubs today have practically a monopoly of light plane flying and, what is more important, of the training of student-pilots. The future of light plane flying therefore remains in their hands, for the obvious trend of economics is to render light plane ownership in anything like American quantities a lovely pipedream.

The light plane owners have sold out so quickly and the survivors are so bludgeoned by fate that when the department recently tried to convene a meeting for the owners to give vent to their "beefs" there were not sufficient owners found to make a sizeable meeting and the Aero Clubs had to be invited as well.

In a continent of 3 million square miles and 7,600,000 population this position is fantastic. It is being compared by some people with the position in the U.K., where private flying is regarded by authority with a deep-rooted suspicion as a possible Truman fifth column.

Aero clubs are actually collapsing in Britain, where the position is described by the official journal *The Light Plane* as "that of a patient suffering from acute pernicious anaemia." An investigation is being made at the moment by an official body in such secrecy that the Council of the Association of British Aero Clubs cannot even discover the names of the officials concerned.

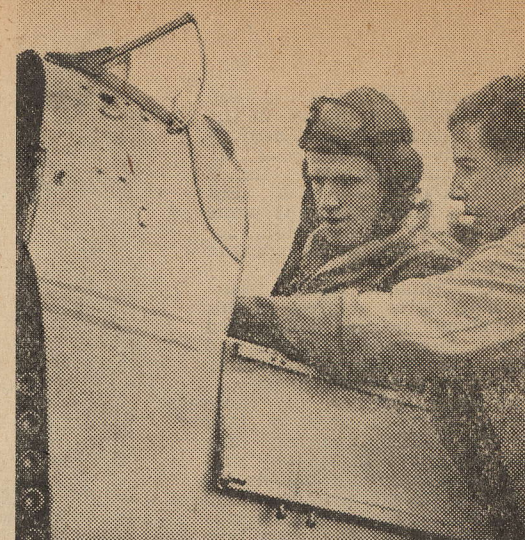
The attitude of the Government to aero club flying in Australia is comparatively enlightened, if one compares it with the U.K. Despite jus-



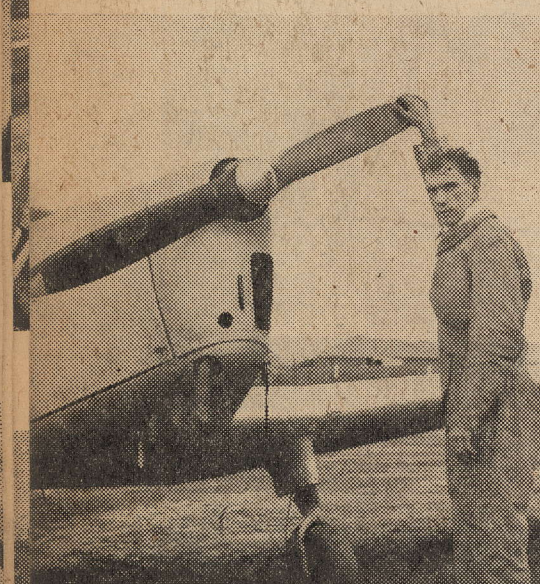
Keith Henry of Newcastle Aero Club (top) climbs into a Chipmunk now being operated with enthusiasm by that club. The lower picture shows the tandem two-place Canadian built trainer on a flight over typical New South Wales country. The NAC has recently been rendering valuable flood relief.



RVAC temporary hangar at Essendon offers shelter only before the club is shifted to Moorabbin. Sunday scene.



Instructor Len Hogan runs over a Tiger Moth layout with student pilot Jim Nevanlinna at



RVAC Instructor Des Cook with a club Whitney before taking off on a flight.

tifiable criticisms, it is nevertheless true that Department of Civil Aviation officials honestly believe they are doing their best to help private flying. They are hampered mostly by the lack of a definite policy on light plane flying which can be taken only by the Minister and the Director-General of Civil Aviation.

The future of light plane flying, of Aero Club flying, in this country, like the future of so many things, depends entirely upon the Government. It is merely one of many aspects of life today in which the public servant has, for good or evil, the absolute controlling influence. The Aero Clubs are able to work only within the limits imposed upon them by the civil servants.

The cautious attitude of the Aero Club Federation of Australia seems to reflect its knowledge and acceptance of the extent to which the movement is now dependent upon Government support.

The president of the Federation (Mr H. D. Arnott) writes:—"Our experience has been that representations on behalf of the clubs have been sympathetically considered and in most cases eventually adopted, and it would be highly undesirable as well as misleading, in fact, for the impression to be given that the clubs are critical of departmental policy."

He commented also that, "The clubs do not, of course, see eye to eye with the Department on all matters, but they are working in very close co-operation with it, and their successful operation is largely due to the assistance and goodwill of the department."

#### What the Managers Want

In the last few weeks, the writer visited the managers of the RVAC, RACQ, RAC of NSW, and the Newcastle Aero Club. In these talks he found that the managers very definitely did not agree the department was doing all it could to help.

Rightly or wrongly, the managers of these clubs want more money from the Department and several of them were very strong in expressing their desire.

The attitude taken by Mr Arnott in conversation with the writer was that the Australian clubs are better treated than any other aero club movement in the world as regards Government subsidies. In this he is correct, as he is when he states that both Britain and South Africa have been studying our Australian subsidy system with considerable admiration. But as the aero clubs in the UK, on their own admission, are suffering from pernicious anaemia, the comparison is hardly good.

The existing agreement between the Department of Civil Aviation and the main aero clubs of Australia began on February 1, 1947. It ends on June 30, 1951, but the clubs have taken advantage of a clause in the agreement to seek a reconsideration. Discussions are now proceeding on certain proposals.

The clubs concerned are those in the Aero Club Federation of Australia (the "Royal" Clubs of Victoria, NSW, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, plus the Tasmanian Aero Club), and the aero clubs of Newcastle and Broken Hill.

There is a "maintenance" of £1 per hour of flying at home base and 30% per hour from home base, for all owned by these clubs. There is a system of grants made for licences, called an issue when the club concerned to pilot to A licence standard; it gets £75 at home or £90 away from home base. It is also a renewal bonus of £12/10 for each pilot who has his A licence each year, which requires three hours' flying a

A further subsidy, which is a bone of considerable contention just now, is the "contingent liability" to supplement the replacement reserve—the 1% each flying hour. The contingent subsidy has not yet been granted by any aero club, for the Department will only grant the money on the purchase of approved aircraft and one gathers that the types will be only those types issued as primary training aircraft.

The various subsidies, not including the contingent liability, total some £40,000 plus interest, which is a minor item of Departmental expenditure. It is a fleabite of millions spent annually by the Department, and the Aero Club managers know this. They say the Government could easily provide the money.

#### Money Badly Allocated

There are two sides to this question. DCA believes its financial provision to the clubs is adequate and generous, and there is a good reason for this point of view. The managers, who are the active ones in the field, who must get on with the money grants, say it could be more money.

Some day there should be a money overall. All say the money is today wrongly allocated. They point out that the subsidy system is the same for all members. It may be a student pilot, who has to get his B licence and go into aviation as a career. Or it may be a sleek-haired society type who waltzes out for an odd hour or two, matter of personal enjoyment. It may, again, be a grey-haired old man who has the old birdman con-

Managers say, and they are agreed on this, that it is stupid to give the man over 30 or so, apart from the just-likes-to-fly type, the Government grant in the same way as the would-be professional or the young fellow who wants his A because it might be a good Defence background. In a word, the grants should help the youngest.

### To Help Young Fliers

At present, a youngster of 18-20 needs some £85 to get his A licence and some £450 to get his B or commercial ticket. He has to raise the £2 an hour as he goes along. Unless he has considerably more means than the average student flier, he simply cannot get continuity. He goes two steps forward and 1½ back. Managers say the youngster ought to get £2 subsidy per hour, to allow him to fly at £1 an hour. They would also like to see him offered a time-payment scheme, which would allow him to pay back at about £1 a week over several years, and thus be able to secure continuity of flying and lack of worry.

Some DCA officials agree on the need for reallocation of the subsidy, and regret that the money is not aimed to help the young fellow; but the decision to alter this must come from higher authority.

At present, incidentally, the cost of flying varies in the clubs. The Newcastle Aero Club, which is said to be the biggest in the British Commonwealth, and is certainly the largest in Australia, charges 50/ an hour dual on DH82, Avro 643 or Hornet Moth, or 35/ solo (55/ and 40/ night). Auster dual is 75/, solo 50/; Wackett, 75/ and 40/; Ryan dual, 60/ and 40/; Dragon, £5 and 70/; Gemini, £6 and £5.

There is no entrance fee for membership, and all flying members pay 21/ a year, non-flying 10/6. The Newcastle Club is now financial, but works on an overdraft. It has something like £60,000 in assets as it owns its own aerodrome and all the buildings, which are permanent and very impressive.

The RAC of NSW charges for Tiger, Hornet or Leopard 62/ dual and 33/ solo, with a special cross-country rate of 47/, and night-flying rates of 77/ and 47/. Dragon

is £4 and £3. Membership fees are £3/3/ for pilots and £1/1/ for ordinary members, 10/6 for women.

Queensland charges an entrance fee of £10/10/ if the member has not trained with a recognised subsidised club, or £5/5/ if he has, and £3/3/ annual fee. Student pilots pay no entrance fees. Rates are 45/ an hour for either dual or solo Tiger or Hornet, without distinction.

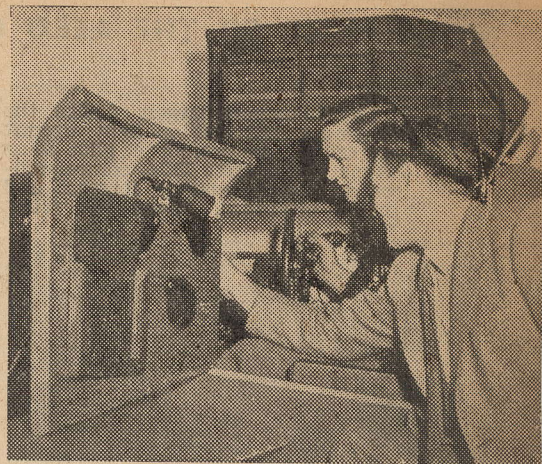
To the outsider, the curious thing about these charges is that the unsubsidised commercial charter-school companies in Sydney and Brisbane can offer flying just as cheaply. That does not allow them to make a profit, but it is a factor which must be taken into account when one considers the subsidy question. Aero clubs get subsidy for each flying hour, plus lump sums for licences and renewals, and also club annual and/or entrance membership fees.

According to some people in the Department and in aero clubs, the Australian clubs offer the cheapest flying in the sterling countries. But the facts are that, for example, the Rochester Flying Club of Kent charges £3 an hour dual on Tiger, Auster or Magister, or 45/ solo. The £3 figure is general in England and need not be augmented by 25 per cent. exchange as the sterling £ in England is actually less valuable in buying power than the Australian £ is in Australia. And Rochester does not get £1 an hour from the Government.

There are other aspects of flying which some managers debate with the Department. They claim that the present system of C of A annually for light aircraft is absurd. A man may fly a Tiger Moth only 100 hours a year, but he must have a C of A done for that Tiger in the same way as a commercial operator must for a DC4 which has clocked 4500 hours over the same period. It is expensive, whether for the private owner or the club.

### Annual Inspection Out

The Department says an annual inspection by DCA inspectors cannot be done because there are not enough inspectors, so the C of A business must remain, for safety reasons. Even if inspectors were available, the necessity for seeing inside the fabric of old aircraft such as Tigers involves unavoidable expense. The aero clubs would like to see a C of A last two years.



Link training for 21 year old John Hill, of Woodville, at the RAC of SA.



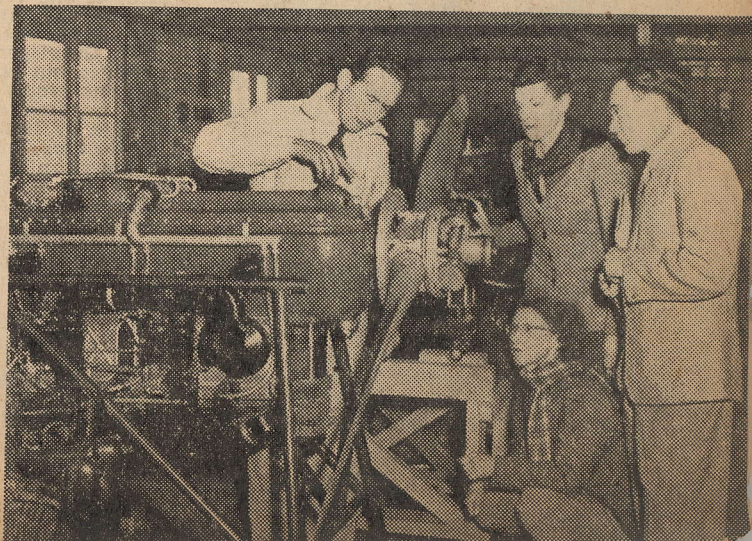
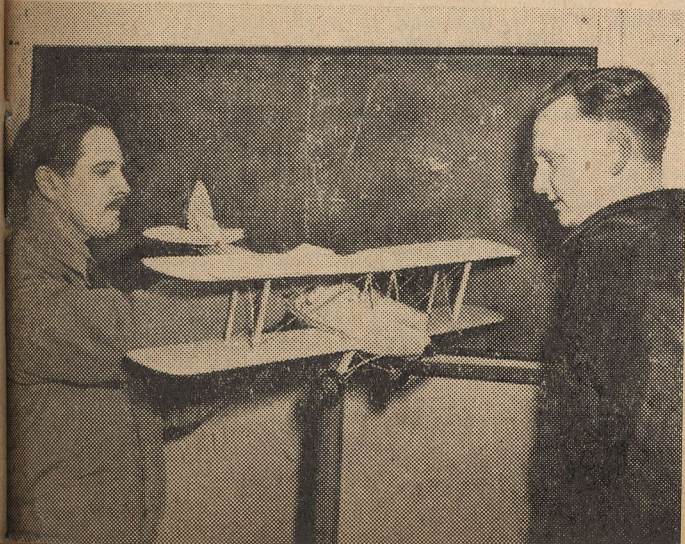
Bill Gregory (Mitcham) checks maps with CFI (Reg. Ellis) before his first cross-country; wants airline job.

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Dr. S. M. Dunstone (ex-RAAF W/C) uses a model to instruct electrician R. Hannon (Myrtle Bank) at RAC of SA.

Jack Neville (former PAA engineer) gives engine lecture to P. Rose (sitting) and P. Hubbard, while the CFI looks on.



## WHERE GO THE AERO CLUBS?

Continued from Page 19

The managers largely dislike the existing restrictions on light aircraft operations. At present a pilot must phone the nearest DCA control officer to secure weather forecast and get a clearance, giving his route,



A Sunday line-up of Royal Queensland Aero Club planes and members. The club is eager for more aircraft.



Officials of the RQAC. From the left, Mr A. S. Luckman (manager), Alderman Russ Roberts (treasurer), Mr J. V. Cronin, Miss F. Redman, Mr R. A. Collinson (committee members), and Mr C. G. Henderson (president).



Instructor K. Parker (right) with Queensland members D. Green, John Mills and J. Carlson, after a morning training "flip" in a club aircraft.

and other details. This is regardless of whether he is 200 miles from the control. In practice some private pilots on big sheep stations in the Inland ignore these rules and DCA tacitly agrees. But one cannot fly between townships like that.

The result is that sometimes it is just as quick to take a train as to go into a town, which may be miles away, make a long-distance call, and fix things up for a flight. This control of light plane flying strangles the game. DCA's reply is that it is necessary.

The truth is that sooner or later DCA chiefs must make up their minds whether to treat light plane pilots as fools or let them kill themselves if they want to. They argue that it is impossible to class aircraft with cars, because aircraft kill other people. This is an absurd statement, for car accidents can kill or injure passengers or bystanders as well as drivers.

So is the statement that if restrictions were raised the newspaper uproar about any resulting crash or the disappearance of an aircraft in the Outback would be followed by public attacks on DCA. If DCA forgets the birdman complex on flying, so will the public in time. The whole attitude to flying is wrong in Australia.

Managers are also somewhat upset about the DCA's contingent liability. The RAC of NSW tried recently to get the money to buy a DH Chipmunk, about £3000. The Department refused to pay because the Chipmunk had not then been adopted by the RAAF as a Tiger replacement! There is no possibility of securing the money for any type unless the DCA officials agree. In effect, they will agree only to types adopted by the RAAF as trainers — presumably the Chipmunk or the Prentice. In any event, the Chipmunk may cost something like £4000 next year.

### Managers Were Critical

Several managers I met were vehement in criticism of the price and quality of British aircraft. Only the Newcastle AC manager was a Chipmunk enthusiast, though he claimed the price was steep. For his money he would replace all his Tigers with Chipmunks. The only Chipmunk in Australia is now on loan to his club, which is battling with the RAC of NSW to buy it, as the DCA officials now agree Chipmunks may be bought.

Most of the managers to whom I spoke do not favor British aircraft, apart from the Tiger. In their opinion the Tiger is still a wonderful trainer, but expensive to maintain unless one simply replaces parts from cheap wartime stock. These stocks will fade by 1952, as Tigers are out of production. These managers would buy American if dollars were available, as they say there is more variety available there at a cheaper price. Some disliked the Chipmunk because it is tandem. They say modern trainers should be side-by-side jobs, although the Newcastle manager disagreed.

Mr. Arnott, however, believed British aircraft were better in every way.

The difference in outlook between the managers and the president of the central body is very interesting

and may have a considerable bearing on the situation of the aero clubs. DCA officials find the managers critical as they are, easy to talk with as they want only those changes which are easy to discuss, such as money, according to my talks with DCA. Why then is Mr. Arnott reluctant to admit that managers want these things? They are very matters which were discussed at the recent Federation of Aero Clubs' conference in Sydney.

The attitude of DCA officials, as Chief Examiner of Airmen Clubs Sladen, to whom I talked at length on these matters, is extremely enlightened, with real understanding of aero club difficulties. What is needed in the Department is a definite statement of policy by the authority concerned, on the subject mentioned in this article.

### Clubs Could Help Themselves

There is some reason to believe the DCA thinks the aero clubs could help themselves. And a good foundation for this writer thinks so, too. After the war some clubs adopted a system of management divorced from actual operation. Clubs are now reverting to the sensible plan of management by the club man, a CFI-manager with a minimum of administrative machinery.

Apart from any other question the most important advance could be made would be for the distribution of the subsidy to young men. If this were done, student pilots and commercial pilots in training would be able to fly a day or every week-end and the all hours of the club concerned would be increased.

Such clubs as Tasmania need another 30 hours a month to see the black entry in the account books and this would be achieved if the young fellows got the benefit of the subsidy. The subsidy originally designed for defence purposes, not to help middle-aged business men to get in an hour or two on week-ends. They have to cater for, and should be, they should not get the same advantages as young men who are a defence or commercial aviation future.

There are thousands of men who would fly if it were cheap and their advent into the aero world would bring greater hours, with resulting greater subsidy payments, hours and licences, and they then form the body of trained plane pilots which the aero clubs were really founded to create.

At present that job is being quarter-done because of that difficulty. It is all very well if the clubs are just social clubs that is one of their functions, the social side has a very place. The trouble is that the social side is today the greater side.

The desire of the clubs for money would be answered if the hours flown were increased in any way to increase hourage is a cheaper flying for young fellows at cost to the country is very small.

At the same time it does seem clubs now in the red might benefit by better business management, judging by the fact charter and school operators can fly at the same rates without subsidy, membership fees or grants. That is a matter of internal moment which individual clubs might well explore.