Concorde criticism

Dear Sir—One should not be surprised, I suppose, to read of the support grandeur. Britain can no longer afford empires, either of the colonial or technological kinds. The people of Britain have become incapable of earning their national grandeur. Britain can no longer afford empires, either of the colonial or technological kinds. The people of Britain have become incapable of earning their

What but does come as a surprise is the combination of very questionable statements which make up the argument for the continuation of the project. For example, contrary to what you say, all the objections to Concorde which have prevented orders being placed have not been overcome. We still do not know what the effect of the aircraft will be on the upper atmosphere; airport and boom noise is still a problem; it is still a question of fuel; and its range is shorter than that which is normally expected from an aircraft designed for supersonic speeds. Moreover, all the evidence points to the conclusion that every aircraft sold must be profitable for both the seller and the buyer. No wonder the airlines are not rushing to buy but are cancelling their orders instead.

The fact must be faced that we now live in a quite different world from that which existed when Concorde was first conceived. There is great public concern about the environment, oil is recognised as a precious commodity which must be conserved and the state of the economy in Britain and abroad leaves little room for extravagant enterprises of dubious social and economic value. In short, the problem of tomorrow is how to survive; in this situation, Concorde has no place.

No, we have not passed the point of no return. We should accept that such a point is ever reached in manmade projects such as Concorde. If it is otherwise, then it must go, no matter what the immediate consequences are. Concorde has no future and we should have the courage to face the fact. —Yours faithfully,

J. F. GAMLIN
16 Thomson Place
Glasgow G61 3NU, Scotland
16th July 1974

Dear Sir—I am afraid that your defence of the Concorde project exhibits a severe case of special pleading.

The profitability of this aircraft in commercial service is still extremely doubtful, of course, most leading airlines would have ordered it. But even if this optimistic accountancy be conceded, the very little hope of Concorde becoming a net hard-currency earner when its fantastic fuel consumption is taken into account at present price levels. There is no point in Britain continuing with delusions of inter-national grandeur. Britain can no longer afford empires, either of the colonial or technological kinds. For many reasons, mainly stemming from gross overpopulation, the people of Britain have become incapable of earning their international living with the work of their own hands. We are borrowing about a $1 million per hour to meet our housekeeping bills. People in such a fix cannot afford to waste money on nonessentials. Concorde must be written off.

North Sea oil and gas will, we all expect, save the UK from economic disaster, but there will be little or nothing to spare. The fields are our collateral and by the time they are developed much, if not most, of the production will have to be exported to service and repay our debt. Our overdraft interest, already over £1 million per day, is growing rapidly. The fact that the USA and the USSR are both solvent and can afford to buy supersonic aircraft if they wish is irrelevant.

Finally, what is the social object of the exercise? Britain has a serious problem of social improvements laying claim to our strictly limited supplies of capital. Enabling a handful of v.i.p.s to travel around the world at Mach 2 is not among them. —Yours faithfully,

J. F. GAMLIN
16 Thomson Place
Glasgow G61 3NU, Scotland
16th July 1974

Concorde criticism

Dear Sir—Your editorial makes a number of statements about Concorde which cannot be substantiated; for example:

• It is not too late to recoup some, if not all, of our losses.

It can be argued that, having spent over £100 million on developing Concorde, we would be foolish to stop. It can also be argued that it would be wrong to cancel Concorde because that would throw a large number of French engineers and craftsmen out of work. It cannot be argued that, if we proceed, we may recoup some of our losses when Government manufacturers and British Airways all agree that none of the deferred cost is recoverable.

According to a letter published in The Director, *P.* E. Thornton, Secretary (Aerospace), UK Department of Trade & Industry, said, in answer to questions raised in the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, that the price to BOAC and Air France for their Concordes was £13 million each at July 1971 prices and that, if 25 Concordes were built, the cost would be of the order of £23 million each. So how can we recoup our manufacturers’ losses? If Concorde would break even with a payload of 50–60%, how is it possible for British Airways to operate losses up to £25 million a year? If all the objections to Concorde have been overcome, why have they been sold? In fact, further modifications are already under discussion. As to this being a drain on the economy, if Concorde is ‘to fly to the far corners of the world in half the present scheduled times’ it must fly at full speed, and this type of aircraft will not be acceptable to local inhabitants, the time saving will be negligible.

In a recent issue (16th May 1974 *E&P*, p.350), you showed consideration for the conservation of energy. How then can you extol an aircraft which consumes times the fuel per passenger, compared with wide-bodied subsonic aircraft, for the dubious claim of saving a few hours by the privileged few? —Yours faithfully,

J. E. GAMAGE
11 Pegasus Court, Spenser Road
New Milton, Hants. BH25 6EJ
1st July 1974

Social responsibility

Dear Sir—No matter how much money has been spent on Concorde, they should be judged by their value to our civilisation, not by whether they can make a profit. It is really necessary to reduce the relatively short flying time of international travel for a very small number of people, at the cost of the greatly increased fuel consumption and considerably more noise than that made by improved types of subsonic aircraft. The sensible answer is quite definitely yes. —Yours faithfully,

E. W. CREW
26 St. David’s Drive, Broxbourne
Herts. EN10 7LS, England
25th June 1974

Concorde criticism

Dear Sir—In the 30th May 1974 *E&P*, p.422, the President of The Radio Society of Great Britain pays tribute to the help that Marconi gave to amateurs; I hasten to add that Marconi also showed a keen interest in their activities too, and copies of *Wireless World* were often to be seen in his laboratories. In the autumn of 1974, transatlantic tests were conducted between amateurs in Britain and in the USA, and signals of readable quality were heard by some of us.

The wavelength, as we used to say in those days, was 200 m.

The success of these tests greatly impressed Marconi, and confirmed his belief that short waves could be used for long-distance communica-

He therefore applied for permission to conduct tests at 200 m, and, although this was refused on the grounds that commercial communication might be disturbed, the Postmaster-General did sanction the use of waves of 100 m and below.

A crystal-controlled transmitter was therefore erected at Poldhu in Cornwall in 1921, operating initially on the wavelengths which were received on board the yacht Elettra, which sailed into the Atlantic while measuring the signal strengths as the distance increased. These tests were outstandingly successful.

Subsequently, wavelengths of 64, 32 and 16 m were tested and it was established that, by choosing the appropriate wavelength for the distance and time of day, it was possible to obtain signals of such quality as to permit high-speed recording to any part of the world for a sufficient number of hours each day to the satisfaction of the British Postmaster-General.

Signals were subsequently reinforced by using huge arrays of directional aerials, both at the transmitters and the receiving stations which resulted in the beam system being adopted for the Imperial Communic-

Incidentally, it is relevant to point out that Gerald Garratt suggested at the Centenary colloquium that it was a harmonic from Poldhu that enabled Marconi to receive the first transatlantic signals in 1901, and its wavelength could well have been 200 m, as above—Yours faithfully,

E. W. CREW
Robins, Little Baddow
Chelmsford, Essex CM3 4SY
England
2nd June 1974

Dear Sir—One should not be surprised, I suppose, to read of the support grandeur. Britain can no longer afford empires, either of the colonial or technological kinds. The people of Britain have become incapable of earning their...