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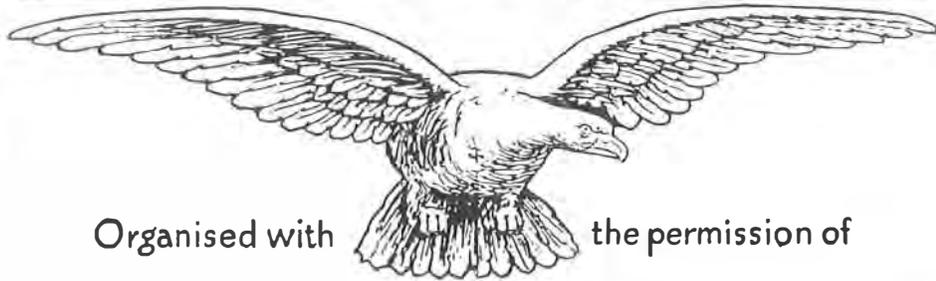
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EMPIRE AIR DAY



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by the

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and the

AIR LEAGUE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

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SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1939



MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN

FROM THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR,
SIR KINGSLEY WOOD

Empire Air Day, 1939, is of special importance and is planned on a larger scale than ever before because this year marks the twenty-first anniversary of the formation of the Royal Air Force as a separate Service. The growth of its importance in recent years is reflected in the great progress which has been made since the expansion programme was commenced. It is in fact more vital to national security to-day than when it was created in the stress of war in 1918.

The great expansion in the number of personnel in the Regular and Reserve Forces, the large increases in the numbers engaged on the production of aircraft and components and the many new stations which have been opened throughout the country, have brought the Royal Air Force into closer contact with many more people than formerly, not only in the British Isles but in many parts of the Empire.

I welcome the growth of public knowledge and interest in the Royal Air Force and I hope that many hundreds of thousands of people will take the opportunity afforded by Empire Air Day of seeing for themselves what has been done to develop it as an efficient weapon to safeguard peace and security and to render their homes and families safe from air attack.

I hope, too, that many of those who visit the Royal Air Force to-day will consider carefully the opportunities for service which it affords.

In June last year I appealed for 31,000 officers and men to join the Air Force during the ensuing nine months. This number equalled the entire strength of the Force in personnel when the expansion scheme was launched and was more than fifteen times the average number entered during a normal pre-expansion year. Yet this figure was reached four weeks before the end of the recruiting year and constituted a record in recruiting for the Air Arm.

The need is still great, however, and a further effort is required this year. The recruiting programme for 1939 is very large and, including the Reserve and Auxiliary services, we require 75,000 officers and men this year.

Of these, 20,000 officers, airmen and boy entrants are needed for the Regular Air Force, which to-day affords a first-class career for young men. Those who do not wish to make the Regular Air Force their calling will find opportunities of service in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and in the Auxiliary Air Force, including the Balloon Barrage Squadrons.

While the displays which are taking place to-day are predominantly of a Service character, the place of Civil Aviation, which is an increasingly important factor in our national life and in our system of communications with the Empire and overseas, must not be overlooked. The development of Service and Civil Aviation should proceed together if the advances which aeronautical science is making to-day are to be of lasting benefit to mankind. For no one can question the increasingly important part which Civil Aviation will play in the future.

Empire Air Day, 1939, will, I think, show that we have achieved much both in Service and in Civil Aviation. Continued progress in both is vital to the welfare of the nation and I am confident that the nation will ensure that this progress is maintained.

King George VI



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