UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN — Friday, May 29, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Now let's have a chat with the weather man. Old Ob. Server has been to the United States Weather Bureau to find out what is stirring besides the wind. You remember a couple of weeks ago, he was telling us about our upper-air work. Since then he has inquired about how our system of upper-air observation along our airways compares with the weather services along European airways ------Well, Mr. Ob. Server? ——

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Mr. W. R. Gregg, chief of our United States Weather Bureau's aerological division, just got back from Europe.

He went over there as our representative to the Madrid meeting of the International Commission for the Exploration of the Upper Air, and in order to study what some of the European weather services are doing for aeronautics.

You see our Weather Bureau keeps up on what is going on. If any other nation works out any better ways of observing or forecasting the weather we want to know about them.

Mr. Gregg flew nearly everywhere he went in Europe; to France, Germany, Holland, and England. He tells me passenger airplane service is in general more developed in Europe than it is in this country. Of course, we have a few airlines, such as the line between New York and Washington, with its hourly service both ways, which does a passenger business even bigger than any of those in Europe. But in the interior of the country, our airplane passenger service is not nearly so highly developed as in Europe. On the other hand, air mail flying is much more developed in this country than in Europe. It is chiefly the mail between different countries that is carried by plane in Europe. The mail within those smaller countries can be handled promptly by train.

Mr. Gregg says the weather services for air routes in France, and Germany, and England, although they have grown up independently, are very much like our own; even to the point of having commissioned forecasters at the larger ports and non-commissioned observers at the smaller intermediate landing fields; and to taking observations not only at the air stations, but at points located at some distance to either side of the air route.

In Germany, pilots are required to consult the weather forecasters before taking off; and in France and England they usually do talk things

over with the weather men, but they do not have to. The weather forecasters in all these countries carefully refrain from giving pilots any advice as to whether a flight should be made. The weather men just give the facts and indications as to what weather will be encountered. Decision as to whether or not the flight shall be made rests with air service officials.

General weather forecasts for the airways in these European countries are made from observations taken four times a day, instead of twice a day as in this country.

In France, the Paris office is the headquarters for weather service to all aviation interests both civil and military. Forecasts for the various flying routes are made at Paris. The forecasts, together with the 4 times a day synoptic reports and pilot balloon observations made at several points in France five times a day, and airplane observations made at one place, when the weather is good, are sent to Le Bourget field by special leased wire.

The reports are entered on the usual small scale maps and posted where pilots and others can consult them. In addition to that, every half hour during the day reports are received by radio from the bigger terminal airports like Croydon, England, and Cologne, Germany. Regular telephone and telegraph reports are received from selected points on the airways, and those intermediate stations send special reports during bad weather or on call from Le Bourget. Those reports are all posted on a very large scale map, and another large scale map is used to show the upper winds at the various pilot balloon stations.

Each State or Province of Germany has a separate and distinct weather service for the general public needs, but the weather service for aviation is under one head for all Germany. The central office is in Berlin, but the weather service for aviation is given at the airports of which there are 16 main ones with meteorologists in charge. Nine of those airports have radio stations and local reports are broadcast every half hour.

In addition to the regular weather stations, the German service for aviation maintains 25 pilot balloon stations and 5 airplane stations to get the upper-air observations.

Mr. Gregg went from Germany to England by way of Holland and in flying over the channel was in fog for forty minutes. In that connection he told me about the system they have over there of directing planes not only to fly to the right of a given line, as is done by radio in this country, but of notifying each plane at what levels to fly so as to avoid collisions in the air. When air travel gets thicker, we'll have to have some such system as that.

In spite of the fog we hear so much about, there are very few cancellations of trips from Croydon, England to the Continent on account of weather. Planes fly on regular schedule 95 per cent of the time.

At Croydon, pilot balloons observations are made four times a day. The balloons used are much like those used in this country, and the lanterns

for night observations, Mr. Gregg says, are almost exactly like those used here.

Speaking of upper-air observations, however, that Madrid meeting Mr. Gregg attended went on record as urging further development of pilot balloon investigations at sea, and more use of airplanes in upper air investigations by all countries.

One of the big jobs of that meeting, however, was to lay plans for the upper air work of the Second Polar Year, which is to be observed next year. From what Mr. Gregg tells me, that will be the most complete exploration of the weather conditions in the upper air ever undertaken. Of course, you know, the main idea is to get a more complete yeararound record of weather in Arctic and Antarctic regions, the biggest blind spots in our daily weather maps. But that investigation includes more than just the polar weather. Upper-air observations will be made at stations located all over the world on the same days each month, so as to get a practically complete picture of the interchange of air between the tropics and the poles. The different nations will not only make simultaneous observations from their regular upper-air stations; but additional stations will be set up on high mountains and special pilot balloon investigations will be undertaken at a number of new points, both on land and sea. In fact, it looks as if next year may mark the coming into its own of world-wide weather observation in three dimensions.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: You have just had a small ear-full of upper-air weather, in a chat from Mr. W. R. Gregg, chief of the aerological division of the United States Weather Bureau. We will have another chat with the weather man two weeks from today.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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