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REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MICROLIGHT COMMITTEE (C.I.M.A.)

Mrs. Ann WELCH

1985 was the year of the first FAI World Microlight Championships. During the previous two years microlight competitions had been held, mostly in Belgium and France, at which tasks had been tried, and contest rules considered in CIMA. At Millau, France, in August last, the sum of all the experience gained, plus the energy of contest Director Hubert Aupetit and his team, came together to produce a fine championships.

The main reason that microlights give such challenging flying is that they combine the qualities of both aeroplane and glider. The tasks were primarily for cross country navigation, using turn point photography, and with each microlight limited to 25 litres of fuel. A pilot who ran himself out of petrol and failed to return to base scored zero. Because of the light weight and low stall speed of microlights thermals can be used effectively, and some pilots were flying distances of over 500 km, or staying airborne for up to 6 hours, on their 25 litres - and getting home. Outlandings were no problem as it is not difficult to make a glider type landing in any small field. I have reported this first world championships in detail because I believe that FAI now has a worthy addition to its competitive airsports.

It was a pity that more countries were not represented at Millau. More pilots wanted to come but either the aviation authorities were still prohibiting microlights in their country, or their NACs had failed to recognise this new sport or to integrate it into the NAC system. There may have been, in some cases, good reasons for delays in encouraging, or providing for, microlights, but at Millau it nearly resulted in the event not being a championship. We had just 7 countries and 5 is required to make it an FAI world championship. Apart from the S Africans, who were finally refused visas, two other countries were entered, but withdrawn at the last moment because of domestic problems within their own NAC.

The countries which came, and are on record as contributing to the success of this event were France, USA, FRG, UK, Spain, Belgium and Luxemburg.

Bids have come from Spain for the 1986 Europeans, and from Belgium for the 1987 Worlds, for decision at the CIMA meeting next month (December 2).

The development of microlights worldwide is still variable. In countries, like France and USA, with minimum regulation the sport has developed well, though in widely different directions. In others, state requirements are too harsh. In Britain, for example, CAA controls a small microlight factory with greater severity than, eg: FAA does with Boeing. I have said in earlier reports that in aviation, which is supposed to be international, the number of different microlight requirements worldwide is almost unbelievable. Yet, at its firstmeeting, CIMA, to avoid such complication, spelled out the definition of a microlight, proposed pilot standards, and has since recommended a weight supplement for school 2-seaters to make them rugged enough.

It would, I believe, be helpful if FAI could ask ICAO to clearly recommend that control of airsports, such as microlights, should not be the province of state authorities, but of NACs. Even though there might be some internal organisational difficulties NACs would need to work only with their own national associations and pilots, and not negotiate with state authorities as well.

Last year CIMA proposed two new record categories, which should come into use on January 1 1986. One of these is Distance on 10 litres fuel. It will be interesting to see which microlight first breaks the 1000 km barrier, and the technical developments which result. As I said, FAI has a good new competitive airsport, demanding a wide range of skills from its pilots. I would sincerely ask NACs which have not yet integrated microlights into their activities to help this young sport. It is not only now quiet, but not too expensive for the ordinary club pilot, particularly the younger ones.

25.10.1985

Ann Welch. President CIMA.