

The Aeronautical Era

Mitchell was among a few to see the tremendous promise of aviation and the potential offered by air power. Mitchell saw air power fundamentally changing the globe as it became a critical and vital element of national security and of a nation's economy. Mitchell's views have been validated over the decades as air power has become acknowledged as among the most critical elements of national power, because both a nation's economic and military power depend upon it.

It was not only the organization of the military component that Mitchell advocated, but also a national program of aeronautics that saw a nation's air power as the total of its civilian and military aviation. With the airplane, Mitchell saw the peoples of the earth entering into a new era, the aeronautical era.

- The world stands on the threshold of the "aeronautical era." During this epoch the destinies of all people will be controlled through the air. Our ancestors passed through the "continental era" when they consolidated their power on land and developed their means of communication and intercourse over the land or close to it on the seacoast. Then came the "era of the great navigators," and the competition for the great sea lanes of power, commerce, and communication, which were hitched up and harnessed to the land powers created in the continental era. Now the competition will be for possession of the unhampered right to traverse and control the vast, the most important, and the farthest reaching element of the earth, the air, the atmosphere that surrounds us all, that we breathe, live by, and which permeates everything.⁹⁴

WILLIAM "BILLY" MITCHELL'S AIR POWER

- Every airplane that a nation owns, whether commercial, civil or military, is a great asset, as they can all be used in an emergency.⁹⁵
- Military Aeronautics may be said to have begun with the War in Europe on August first, 1914.⁹⁶
- Aeronautics is a new and developing art. We must not prepare for what happened yesterday, but what is going to happen tomorrow, and the day after. Let us not forget the lessons of the past with respect to aeronautics, and again place ourselves in an absolutely defenseless position before the other nations of the world.⁹⁷
- If one thinks how long it took to develop steam and electricity, one is struck by the rapid development which has accompanied airplane evolution since the beginning of the War.⁹⁸
- Each year we learn more about it [flying], we go faster, higher and for greater distances without landing.⁹⁹
- Aviation at the present time can operate in practically any weather and under all conditions, except those of very heavy fog. Even this now is being attacked and a solution appears probable in the future.¹⁰⁰
- Those who develop aviation, or anything new for that matter, must not be bound by traditions of the past.¹⁰¹
- The average dweller on the earth never knows that above him aircraft in the United States are speeding between the Atlantic and Pacific, and from the northern frontier to the southern frontier, on regular scheduled trips.¹⁰²
- In fact, there is not one department of the Government which cannot utilize in some way the activity of aircraft.¹⁰³
- The whole aeronautical development, military, civil and commercial, is inseparably involved in one organization.¹⁰⁴
- The substantial and continual development of air power should be based on a sound commercial aviation.¹⁰⁵
- The development of aviation, however, since the first flights of the Wright Brothers at Ft. Myers, Va., to the present, has been much more rapid and practical than

THE AERONAUTICAL ERA

in the time required for a corresponding development of steam engines and electricity, automobiles, the telephone and telegraph, or wireless telegraphy.¹⁰⁶

- The development of aeronautics is infinite. . . . It is increasingly evident that the future national defense, future predominance in commerce, and the future economical development of a country lie in the air.¹⁰⁷
- In fact all aircraft developments, the factories that make them, the airways that are established for civil aviation and the civilian pilots and crews, are distinct military assets, and can bring in a return in time of peace, thereby reducing the national expenditure necessary in their maintenance if they were kept solely and exclusively for war.¹⁰⁸
- A system of airways would more greatly help civilian aviation than any other one thing; in fact, without it civil aviation cannot be developed because it is too expensive for any one individual, company, or corporation to establish and maintain airdromes all through the country.¹⁰⁹
- In the development of national aeronautics, commercial aviation is almost as great an asset as if it were regularly incorporated into fighting units.¹¹⁰
- In England, before the establishment of their department of the air, [air] regulation was turned over to the British Board of Trade and it is said that one of the first regulations they made was that when two airplanes met each other in the fog they should blow their fog horns! There were other rules almost as ludicrous as this, because the work was being done by men untrained in air matters.¹¹¹
- The terrible conditions in our national aeronautics today is not so much the result of the absolute ignorance of individuals, because often these are selected on the principle of saying 'tag, you're it; go play with aviation,' when they know nothing about it and are really more to be pitied than blamed. The trouble is with the system,

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and we flying people insist that our views be known and weighed by the American public.¹¹²

- What we want to lead up to is this. Aviation must be ready when the war starts, because that is when aviation will be called on. Airplanes do not last forever and develop rapidly. Relative strength in the air depends on what the other fellow has.¹¹³
- A system of airdromes and airways through the country is almost as necessary in the application of an air force as is a system of gasoline and oil stations, with all their accompaniments of roads and telegraph and telephone lines for the automobilist, or a similar organization for the railroads.¹¹⁴