The New York Times
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off. "All the News That's Fit to Print"
ADOLPH O. HIRSCH, Publisher 1904-1936.
Purchased Every Day in the Year by
THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.
Additional Sales by
Judge Ochs Affiliates,
President and General Manager,
CONRAD N. NELSON, Secretary.
SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1941.

PLANE FROM AUTO PLANTS

The C. I. O. is entitled to insist on a fair and thorough examination of its program to produce 500 pursuit planes a day within six months, by utilizing idle plant and adopting existing machines in the automobile industry, it must be said, however, that certain weaknesses in the plan have become more evident on examination.

In the first place, the plan is aimed at mass production of pursuit aircraft, a category in which the aviation industry itself already approaches near-military production levels. However, this category is not nearly so urgently needed, either to bolster Britain or to strengthen our own defenses, as the bomber category. In this matter, Mr. Olofson has told his own industry: "There is no use worrying about light planes, one can get them." In fighting planes we are in pretty fair shape. But bombing planes, from 2500 pounds up to the 10,000-pound class, are needed, and they must be worked out for real production before we can get quantities." In consequence, plans are being made to utilize important units of the automobile industry, for quantity production of bombers by the "assembly line" method. To test the assembly line method, up to full capacity; to minimize production of light planes would upset the whole undertaking, without furnishing the type of aircraft most needed.

Even if one consideration were to be swept aside, there are other factors in the situation. When it comes to engine production, a large part of the public does not realize the wide difference between the automobile engine and the airplane engine. A typical automobile engine, having about 200 horsepower, is not closely limited to the ratio of weight per horsepower, and for these reasons, problems of cooling and machining are much minimized. An aviation engine for combat aircraft must deliver well in excess of 1000 horsepower, while individual air-cooled engines of more than 1500 horsepower have been tested successfully. Every ounce of weight counts. Charges for producing such airplane engines would require complete reconstruction of the machines now used for automobile engine production, including the tools, or in many cases are mounted.

Use of idle plant facility, recommended by the C. I. O. proposal, is of course highly desirable, as is the recommendation for the best possible allocation of skilled men. Both are already largely utilized by the automobile industry, and in part, have begun. Other practical suggestions of the proposal double and beyond the slates by Mr. Kinsley and the mass-production-minded men of the automobile industry. But we should not jump too hastily in the conclusion that we either want or can get 500 combat airplanes a day from automobile plants.