

We have also shown that passenger flow and clearance delays are not necessarily caused by airports, but are frequently due to inadequate staffing by customs and immigration authorities at peak traffic times.

Airport operators are doing all they can to increase capacity and maximize the use of existing capacity. The scarcity of physical space in some locations can be overcome only at a very high cost, which the public may not be willing to pay through higher ticket prices. In the future, airport capacity expansion will be subject to increasing environmental and economic constraints, which will require new and innovative approaches on our part.

***It would seem that airports are customarily blamed for noise and pollution by numerous environmental lobbies and groups. How do you reply to that?***

As an integral part of the communities they serve, airports are conscious of the need to reduce aircraft noise. Since the most effective way to reduce aircraft noise is to curtail it at source, we advocate increased stringency of ICAO's noise and emission standards for all new aircraft types in order to encourage manufacturers and airlines to develop and use cleaner and quieter engines and aircraft. In turn, this will ensure long-term traffic growth within environmental capacity limitations.

In addition, we promote stringent land use planning around airports in order to preserve the gains of noise-reducing technological advances.

***What about airport economics?***

There is no doubt that sound and realistic economic strategies are the life-blood of success and ACI participated in the revision of the

ICAO Council Statements on Airport Charges in December 1991.

These ICAO guidelines are used by most governments for preparing national regulations for airport charges. They are also used during the consultation process between airports and their users, and may be cited in disputes between them.

As a result of our efforts, these guidelines now recognize that airports make reasonable profits, and that airports may produce sufficient revenues to contribute towards capital improvements.

The guidelines also recognize that airports may levy minimum landing fees per aircraft, especially at congested airports and during peak periods. Also that aircraft parking charges may be based on length of stay. These are two extremely important changes that help airports charge more realistic prices for scarce capacity.

***In recent years, airlines have accused airports of increasing their charges. Is this a valid complaint?***

ACI used internationally recognized ICAO statistics to show that genuine airport charges worldwide consisting of fees levied by airports have in fact been an exceptionally stable component of airline operating costs since 1978. On average, they have remained at about 4% over the past 15 years.

***One of the major criticisms of airports is the slow and inefficient clearance of passengers, baggage and cargo by government inspection services. What is ACI doing to help resolve this problem?***

This is an extremely important issue. For example, ACI has succeeded in introducing into ICAO Annex 9 (Facilitation) a recommended practice for maximum clearance time of 45 minutes for passengers.

At the next revision of the Annex in 1995, we intend to propose upgrading this practice to a standard, thus making it more compelling for governments to streamline and adequately staff their immigration and customs control. We also intend to propose provisions for maximum clearance time for cargo and for simplification of documentation requirements for passenger and cargo processing.

***So what does the future hold for airports and ACI?***

Airport operators will face change on a scale which would be difficult to manage under any circumstances. ACI is now in the process of finalizing a new strategic action plan which will strengthen the organization's effectiveness and respond to the membership's needs.

Key elements of this plan will address airside operational matters such as the advent of new large aircraft and the introduction of new air traffic management and landing aid technology, airport environment capacity constraints, air transport liberalization, and economic constraints and increasing competition. Also facilitation problems and growing security requirements, as well as narrowing the gap between airports in developing and industrialized countries by appropriate assistance programs.

Future work programs will place greater emphasis on these areas in order to develop global airport policies and positions in a timely manner, strengthen ACI's role in representing airports on the international scene, improve communications with members, and enhance relations with other organizations to ensure effective consultation and proper coordination in areas of mutual interest. ➔