

CANADA AND THE FORMATION OF ICAO

Canada signed the 1919 Paris Air Convention setting up the International Commission for Air Navigation, the comparatively small body dealing with international aviation between the two Great Wars, but during this period Canada was mostly interested in building up its domestic flying. This was a time of anarchy in the air, when some countries refused to permit air lines to cross the air space above their territory, necessitating costly detours. Others refused landing as well as transit rights. Air transport became highly uneconomic and lines were heavily subsidized at the expense of the national taxpayers.

During this last war, Canada became actively interested, as we have seen, in flying abroad, and concerned about conditions in this field. Prime Minister Mackenzie King told the Canadian House of Commons on April 2, 1943, that: "The Canadian Government strongly favours a policy of international collaboration in air transport and is prepared to support in international negotiations whatever international air transport policy can be demonstrated as being best calculated to serve not only the immediate national interests of Canada but also our overriding interest in the establishment of an international order which will prevent the outbreak of another war." This speech is the keynote of Canada's aviation policy abroad.

Canada also sought effective machinery for international co-operation in flying. The Canadian Draft Convention on Civil Aviation, the earliest such complete plan, was tabled in the Canadian House of Commons, March 17, 1944. This Draft, representing the type of agreement which the Canadian Government would be prepared to support, provided multilateral granting of Four Freedoms of the Air under an international authority which had power to supervise international aviation and prevent abuses of these Freedoms. Any reversion to the "hard bargaining" of prewar days was considered by Canada to be "unthinkable." The Draft, as approved by the Canadian Parliament, was then improved at the Commonwealth Air Conference in Montreal in late 1944 and at meetings with United States authorities. It served as a basis of discussion at the Chicago International Civil Aviation Conference in November of that year in drawing up the Permanent Convention providing for ICAO.