

Canada and ICAO

THE International Civil Aviation Organization is one of ten inter-governmental organizations which are linked with the United Nations through special agreements arranged by the Economic and Social Council and approved by the General Assembly and by the organizations concerned. The Specialized Agencies of the United Nations are expert in their respective fields: labour, health, education, food and agriculture, finance and banking, civil aviation, postal matters, telecommunications and meteorology.

Need for International Action

Civil Aviation offers to the world a means of moving people and goods at great speed and over long distances but it is an activity which has a peculiar need for international collaboration. Not only are aircraft themselves most complex machines but the equipment and services they require on the ground—for communications, weather forecasting, air traffic control, radio navigation and landing aids—are also complex and together form a tightly integrated system which requires experience and skill to operate. This characteristic of complexity would not of itself impose a need for inter-governmental collaboration, if it were not that civil aviation, in its present state at least, is predominantly a means of long-range transport; in most parts of the world air routes to be economically sound must cross international borders. Air services must be both safe and regular. Safety and regularity require that ground services be of a high order and that high standards be established in such matters as qualifications for pilot licences and airworthiness specifications for aircraft. All these matters require close international co-operation and standardization.

History

These facts of life for civil aviation received recognition as early as 1919 when a number of nations attending the Peace Conference at Versailles established the International Commission for Aerial Navigation. This body operated mainly in Europe where rapid progress in aviation and a multiplicity of national frontiers combined to make the need most great. Until 1939 there was no serious need for organization on a world-wide basis because the great oceans imposed formidable barriers to the largest aircraft of the day and made inter-continental air services uneconomic if not impossible.

The Second World War changed that situation. Within two or three years after 1939 streams of large aircraft were flying shuttle services across the Atlantic and Pacific, while tremendous technical advances were made under the stimulus of war. Chains of ground facilities were set up by the Allied forces to serve the main trans-oceanic routes and new routes into areas not previously served. At the end of the war all this technical development was available to the civil air operators. The kind of service they could offer was superior to their best pre-war efforts, and there was a vastly increased demand for their services. In 1946, the first full post-war year, world-wide air traffic was fully nine times greater than it had been in 1938. It has continued to