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National Association of State Aviation Officials: Report of Committee on Airports and Airways

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON AIRPORTS AND AIRWAYS

By FLOYD E. EVANS, *Chairman*

Here we are once more ready to settle down and wrestle again with our orphan child "The Airport."

As chairman of this session it does not behoove me to take much time in presenting a report of your Airport and Airways Committee as we have several speakers on the program who have very well prepared papers and talks that will I am sure cover a great deal of the field that we are so vitally interested in. I do have some definite opinions on this airport subject, however, and will take the opportunity of presenting them at this time.

Two years ago a thorough, interesting and intelligent report was prepared by the American Society of Planning Officials in cooperation with the American Municipal Association. This document was labeled "The Airport Dilemma." Unless we make more progress toward solving this serious airport problem soon, it is suggested that these associations get out a revised edition entitled "The Airport Tragedy."

We appear today to be no closer to reaching the objective that our association has long sought than we were a year ago. In fact, we probably are not quite as well off as we were a year ago for new regulations promulgated by the only organization that has been our savior during the past years, namely the Works Progress Administration, are such that it is quite difficult, in fact almost impossible, to get an airport project approved. First of all local communities cannot afford to put in the sponsor's contribution of 25% that is required, and the \$6.00 per man per month for other than labor costs does not furnish enough money to start to pay for the materials, equipment rentals, etc., required for further development of landing facilities.

The need and necessity of many airports and landing fields located in such manner and so developed as to be an important part of a national network of landing facilities still exists. My statement to you contained in my address as outgoing president, delivered a year ago at Omaha, still holds true. Namely, "The national defense aspect of aircraft landing facilities alone demands federal recognition and in addition these facilities are a vital part of the national air transportation system that will place all of our manufactured products next door to our market. The airplane has already and will continue to speed up our mail delivery and will increase the radius of business activity of our citizens manyfold. Without airports the airplane is useless." This sentiment, I am sure, is endorsed by everyone associated in any way with the aeronautic industry.

The national defense feature of our airports at this time, with the European struggle in full blast, is far more vital than we realized a year ago. Many more miles of air mail routes have been established during the year and more miles will be established in the future necessitating more and more airports and material improvements in existing airports now known as off-line airports. Air express and passenger travel have increased tremendously during the past

twelve months and continues to increase rapidly. This shows definitely that there is a demand on the part of the American Manufacturers and the public in general to utilize fast transportation for speeding up business.

During the past year we have seen many large communities become disappointed by the lack of income at their airports and have failed to make appropriations for further improvement or even the maintenance of same. Many other communities still have the interest and enthusiasm they once possessed but are not in a financial position to further improve or properly maintain the facility in which they have already made a tremendous investment. Encouraged by the United States Conference of Mayors there will no doubt be a so-called "set down" by some of our cities in regard to more local financing of airports.

Laxity on the part of federal officials in the past to recognize the urgency of federal financial assistance for the construction and maintenance of airports has been appalling. It was with the greatest difficulty that any mention was included in the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 of federal airport assistance. It was only on the demand of representatives of our association, the United States Conference of Mayors, the American Municipal Association, the National Aeronautic Association, the American Legion, the Private Flyers Association and several other organizations that any mention whatever was included in this most important aviation act.

A survey of the airports of the nation was demanded in this act and in addition a certain concession was made whereby navigation facilities by definition included the landing area of an airport, and the Administrator of the Authority was authorized to designate and establish, operate and maintain said air navigation facilities.

The Airport Survey directed to be made by the Civil Aeronautics Authority was eventually presented to Congress. This report was presented at such a late date that it was impossible to get national support behind the recommendations made. No appropriation bill requesting federal funds for putting into effect the recommendations included in the Civil Aeronautics Authority's Report was introduced until too late in the Session of Congress to even get a hearing.

The way is now open for the federal government to legally participate in the activities we have demanded since 1933. An appropriation is required and that can be secured only by our association combined with other national associations continuing our efforts and keeping our Congressmen informed that the airport problem is really serious, and that unless federal participation is secured in the near future our air transportation system and air defense system are in jeopardy.

The above associations, all of whom stood firmly with us on our demands for recognition of the airport problem a year ago are still ready to continue with this support. In addition the newly formed American Association of Airport Executives is developing strength and will exert every effort shoulder to shoulder with us to get immediate assistance. Further, the American Road Builders Association have interested themselves in our problems and I am sure that we can depend upon them 100% for support. I am unofficially advised that this association would, no doubt, get wholeheartedly behind the Vinson Bill or some analogous bill that would provide for federal funds for airport construction, except that that association would demand that the work be done on a contract basis instead of with the use of relief labor. This demand I believe is very logical.

We are all very grateful to the relief administrations that have been so

liberal in their aid to airports, but all of us realize that there has been great inefficiency in this work. Airports have in many instances been used as labor pools where great number of relief workers could be concentrated with a minimum of supervision, often with inadequate equipment and tools. This resulted in extreme inefficiency, probably more so than on any other type of relief project.

We stand today in a far better position to secure assistance in our demands for federal aid from the United States Army Air Corps and War Department than ever before by virtue of the necessity of many improved airports to accommodate our expanded air force. Now is the time to take advantage of this assistance when the nation is so enlightened by the necessity of an air force second to none in the world. I feel we now have in the Civil Aeronautics Authority a very attentive ear for our airport problems. Much change in minds has taken place since members of the Authority have had an opportunity to get into the field and study the problems first hand.

Scheduled air transport operators should now be ready and willing to get behind our move wholeheartedly. When the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 was before Congress for action there were so many important features in this act that the airlines were in such dire need of that they could not afford to jeopardize the many important items in this bill for the sake of aiding our association in securing airport aid.

The private plane industry during the past twelve months has gotten out of its swaddling clothes and has definitely shown itself to be a major factor in the aviation industry. Now is the time to coordinate the activities of all of these organizations and make strenuous demands to secure aid before our airports revert to landing fields and our landing fields to cow pastures.

It is gratifying to note that in the report submitted by the Civil Aeronautics Authority definite recognition was given to State Aviation Organizations whereby it was recommended that federal airport grant applications must be submitted to the federal agency through state agencies. It was also recommended that priority of airport grants should be given in proportion to the aeronautics interest displayed by the respective states, especially in reference to such matters as a coordinated plan of airport development. Our association should support these recommendations and see that it is incorporated in such federal legislation that may be submitted to Congress as the result of this report.

As to airway aids, I feel this matter is entirely a problem of a federal agency with the exception of town markings, which surely is a state and local responsibility. Our association should continue our past efforts to see that every town and city in the United States is properly airmarked and such airmarking maintained. A splendid job has been done in most states in this regard and we owe many thanks to the Works Progress Administration for their very splendid cooperation and assistance.

I want to express our appreciation also to the National Youth Administration, which has been cooperating with our State Aviation Departments in the construction of seaplane bases and airport boundary markers. This work is surely well worthwhile and is a splendid project for that organization. I believe we could turn toward this same organization for further assistance on the maintenance of our many town markings that are rapidly deteriorating.

Some states are still burdened with the operation and maintenance of the visual type airway beacons, which in my opinion are now obsolete and so little used by the flying public that they could well be discontinued. An appeal to the Civil Aeronautics Authority for the discontinuance of this type of aid by our

association, I believe is now in order. The money used for the operation of these facilities could well be used for more worthwhile purposes.

In conclusion I want to appeal to all state officials to continue their interest in the construction and maintenance of landing facilities in their respective states. No matter how good a job we do in promoting aviation generally and enforcing regulations there will be but one lasting landmark to show of our activity, and that is the airports themselves.

Assistance will come if we continue our efforts to secure it. The ground work has been made and I believe during this coming year we will get very definite and tangible results.

I wish to report that during the past year your aviation committee in addition to submitting a very comprehensive brief on the federal airport aid has followed through with their efforts by the issuance of many hundred of letters to state officials and to members of Congress urging the passage of legislation that would benefit our program.