

1940

Editorial

Recommended Citation

Editorial, 11 J. AIR L. & COM. 278 (1940)

<https://scholar.smu.edu/jalc/vol11/iss3/4>

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EDITORIALS

CREDIT WHERE DUE

It is high time for the Bureau of Air Commerce to get its place in the sun. It is higher time for it to cease to be aviation's whipping post. After splendid first years the Bureau did have some bad times—as much due to lack of appropriations and an outmoded air commerce act as anything else—but, be that as it may, the Bureau closed its official existence with great deeds.

Colonel J. Monroe Johnson, after becoming Assistant Secretary of Commerce, had as one of his early tasks the reorganization of the Bureau of Air Commerce. He very soon made Fred D. Fagg and Major R. W. Schroeder respectively Director and Assistant Director of Air Commerce. Howard Rough succeeded Schroeder when the latter resigned to take charge of the safety program of United Air Lines. Bryan Jacobs and Denis Mulligan also served as Assistant Directors when an additional such office was created, and Mulligan afterwards succeeded Fagg as Director.

First, there isn't a man among those named who doesn't stand in the very top rating of people who know aviation and have the ability to solve its problems quickly, intelligently and effectively—and they all had the complete backing of Colonel Johnson to carry on entirely free from any political pressure. They served from March 1, 1937 to August 22, 1938, the date the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 became effective. They gave the Bureau a functional reorganization which is fully recognized and used by the Civil Aeronautics Authority. They restored confidence and gave proper assignment to that fine group of public servants that were the staff of the old Bureau. They recognized the coming of age of the aeronautical sciences and the problems of increasing air traffic, and by such understanding translated into action they set up a system of control and regulation which was the beginning and is the basis of today's magnificent safety record. They decentralized control and by the regional offices brought the Bureau to the door of the pilot and the industry to the extent appropriations would then permit. Without benefit of economic regulation the airlines of this country increased their safety record in the last year of the Bureau by more than 85 per cent over that of the year before the reorgan-

ization on March 1, 1937. And finally the basic structure of the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 was written by the President's Inter-Departmental Committee on Civil Aviation of which Colonel Johnson was Chairman and Director Fagg was Secretary. Thus the 1938 Act as so drafted was but the legislative expression of the Bureau of Air Commerce as it was then functioning, plus what its leaders knew an aviation agency should be.

It is little wonder that the Civil Aeronautics Authority came into being with less eruptions and interruptions than an entirely new topside personnel would otherwise have brought. The Authority was born of legislation conceived by the Bureau, and no Act of Congress has had higher praise. The Authority inherited the Bureau's procedures and regulatory code, and very wisely has only changed them to this date to meet intervening advances in the art of aeronautics. The Authority inherited the Bureau staff—none better in government—and again, with but few exceptions, those staff members have been the backbone of the Authority's fine accomplishments.

Recognition of this remarkable Bureau of Air Commerce record will only confer honor on those wise and generous enough to give it.

FEDERAL VERSUS STATE

Ever since the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 became law all manner of speculation has been indulged as to the jurisdictional scope of this piece of legislation. Historically it seems clear the framers of the 1938 Act did not conceive that it would embrace all air-commerce—at least, they kept any such intentions in the background. On the other hand it is no state secret that certain members of the Civil Aeronautics Authority and its staff have entertained such notions, but no such declaration of policy has been forthcoming from the Authority. Perhaps none is necessary if an appropriate test case is speedily found and vigorously pursued. The latest digests of the Authority cases include several possibilities.

This issue contains Mabel Walker Willebrandt's "Federal Control of Air Commerce," and it is hoped it may be of service in solving this problem. As it should break the ice, this publication opens its pages and invites the submission of pro and con articles.

THIRD NATIONAL AVIATION FORUM

Too much credit cannot be given the National Aeronautic Association for its sponsorship of the National Aviation Forum

of 1940 held at Washington, D. C., May 27th through 29th. Separate days were devoted to private aviation, air transport and national defense. The leaders in each field presented many phases of their respective problems. What's more the speakers included the users of aviation as well as its operators. The subjects discussed are too numerous to be enumerated here, but certainly the National Aeronautic Association will make available all of the manuscripts in permanent form.

Bows must go to Thomas H. Beck, General Chairman of the Forum, and to Gill Robb Wilson, President of NAA. No doubt many other unnamed workers deserve like praise. The future aviation of America has one more stout worker in the revitalized NAA. Its reorganization, stubbornly begun at New Orleans last January, should be enthusiastically completed at Denver this July, if such good works as the Forum mean anything.