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AIRPORT CLASSIFICATION

JOHN S. WYNNE*

Airports have been a matter of continued importance and controversy for the past three years. You gentlemen have played a very important part in its activity and we have shared responsibilities, disappointments and achievements together. Because of the fact that to some of us it is becoming an old story, I would like to devote a portion of my discussion to matters which have nothing to do with the construction of airports or the procedure in obtaining federal funds for the purpose of construction. It is my belief that the past year has witnessed an improvement in a mutual understanding of the problems confronting us and a more cooperative coordination in obtaining those results in which we should all be interested. There have been differences of opinions but I feel such differences were largely misunderstandings on the part of one party or the other and the purpose back of them constructive.

Last year it was promised that a steering committee on airports would be appointed by your organization to contact the Department of Commerce on questions involving policy or procedure. I am sorry that this was not done and I appeal to you this year in the hope that such a committee can be immediately appointed, composed of eastern representatives to work with the Airport Section on ways and means to assist each other in the promotion of airport development. Eastern representatives are preferred because of their accessibility to the Department headquarters located in Washington and it is believed more contacts can be had with less expense to the Committee members. In this connection please bear in mind that the Airport Section has never had more than a maximum of twenty-one field representatives at one time, and a small headquarters staff in Washington, whose mission it was to approve, revise if necessary, and pass upon all airport projects throughout the United States. Four hundred and thirty-nine projects are actually under construction but an additional six hundred were passed upon and visited by these same individuals. These men not only had to visit sponsors of the projects, but contact state and regional WPA officials, in addition to state aviation officials and Chambers of Commerce. Is it any wonder that at times it may

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have appeared that their contacts with the state aviation officials were not often enough or close enough? The program today averages twenty projects per man, widely scattered and requiring at least one visit a month. You can readily see the coverage problem involved.

I understand the WPA representative will take up with you the important matter of Procurement as pertains to this program. It has given considerable trouble in recent weeks. Your members can help in this direction, as the procurement of materials is the responsibility of the Treasury Department whose field offices are unfamiliar with our problems and needs.

Chambers of Commerce have been very active in the airport program. In some instances they have been most helpful, in others most unreasonable, in all cases persistent. I do not know how much you State Aviation Officials work with the Chambers of Commerce, but they certainly are a factor important enough to receive the attention of both State and Federal officials. We should acquaint them with our duties, responsibilities and sound principles.

It may interest you to know that the Department of Commerce is about to recommend that all airports being used by scheduled airlines will be required to qualify for a certificate of suitability for the operations involved, or scheduled airline operations will not be permitted. Present plans provide that an airport receive a certificate of suitability awarded on the basis of minimum specifications and a number of other factors to be announced later. It is the duty of the city holding such certificate to maintain a minimum standard of efficiency of its personnel and facilities if it desires to hold the certificate which will entitle it to be used by the airline operating over that route. There are one hundred and eighty-nine such fields involved at the present time that are actually being used by airlines. The certificates will be divided into three groups:

Class A: Terminal field with certain minimum requirements;

Class B: With lesser minimum requirements;

Class C: This class will largely fall within the jurisdiction of State Authority.

All of these fields will be usable or restricted, as the case may be, in accordance with the plant and facilities offered. When you receive a pilot's license you are told on the license that you are permitted to fly certain types of aircraft and restricted as to other types, unless you have qualified to fly same. In much the same manner, the "airline airports" will be inspected to determine what types of air-

craft it can accommodate safely day and night and under what weather conditions, depending on the facilities offered as well as the type of aircraft that might be used.

In this connection I desire to call attention to something which I think has been badly overlooked by us all in recent years. I believe the status of the Airport Manager should be defined and dignified in the scheme of aeronautical things at this time. Here is a man who has charge of hundreds of thousands of dollars of property, in many cases millions of dollars, and is running a plant wherein the lives of the human public are at stake hourly if such plant is not conducted and maintained properly. It would seem only fair that this individual should be registered as to his qualifications and competency. He should be licensed in the same manner as the pilot who displays a certificate of competency. If such an individual did not possess qualifications, to be agreed upon later, he should not, in my opinion, be hired and put in charge of an "airline airport," any more than a pilot of unknown and unregistered ability could take a plane out on scheduled airline operations. I believe it only fair to the qualified individuals involved that they be protected in the same manner as the pilot as to their competency and authority. It will be a worth-while safeguard and control in the handling of scheduled airline operations and commercial charter and sight-seeing activities being conducted today.