

Editorial

NO BACK SEAT FOR TCA

We recently conducted an unofficial and, Mr. Gallup would no doubt claim, restricted and inconclusive personal survey to see if the sniping we frequently hear against TCA's standard of service has any foundation in fact. Here's what we found.

We started off on a journey to the U.K. by travelling on Airline "A" from Toronto to New York; we left Toronto an hour late, with no explanations given, and arrived in New York about 45 minutes behind schedule. Airline "B" transported us to London; it was first delayed two hours by engine trouble, then an additional 45 minutes because of the crew's inability to close the door. None of this time was made up. Airline "C", London to New York, was half an hour late in loading, followed by another half hour before the engines were started. No explanations offered. In addition, the actual flying time was nearly two hours greater than called for on the company's schedule. Thus, as we taxied up to the ramp at Idlewild, we saw going in the other direction what should have been our connecting TCA Viscount flight to Toronto . . . bang on time. Because we missed this connection, we were not able to get a seat until the second flight following. We can vouch for the fact that both this flight and the one preceding left right on schedule, and that when we finally reached Toronto, it was within five minutes of scheduled time. It looks to us as if TCA doesn't have to take a back seat to anybody.

THE PRICE IS TOO HIGH

Like most people who are engaged in aviation, we never tire of watching airplanes display their prowess in the air. We will turn out to gape at the flashing jet, the lumbering transport, the dancing helicopter with nearly as much enthusiasm as the most aeronautically naive member of the lay public. In short, we like air shows.

Yet we cannot help but feel that the time has come to take a long, hard look at the whole air show concept. Without thinking too hard, we are able to recall at least 11 fatal accidents which occurred in recent years during air shows or in the course of practice flights in preparation for air shows. Seven of these accidents have happened within the last 18 months. Here's the way the record shapes up as we can recall it:

Time	Place	Dead	Aircraft Destroyed	Estimated Value
August, 1949	Toronto	2	2 Seafires	\$ 150,000
Summer, 1952	Trenton	1	1 Vampire	75,000
September, 1953	Toronto	1	1 Sabre	225,000
Autumn, 1955	Chatham	1	1 Sabre	225,000
Spring, 1956	Germany	4	4 Sabres	900,000
Spring, 1956	Kinross, Mich	2	2 CF-100	650,000
Spring, 1956	Chatham	1	1 Sabre	225,000
Summer, 1956	Gimli	1	1 T-33	200,000
Summer, 1956	Winnipeg	2	1 L-19 Bird Dog	16,000
Spring, 1957	London, Ont.	2	2 CF-100	650,000
Summer, 1957	Toronto	2	1 CF-100	650,000
		19	15	\$3,966,000

Grisly Picture: This is a pretty grisly picture: 19 men killed and 15 aircraft worth nearly \$4,000,000 destroyed. This is quite a price to pay for the somewhat nebulous benefits that are derived.

Whenever there is a fatal accident, it is justified with statements that are so hoary they have almost attained the status of clichés: "he was not doing anything he would not be called upon to do during routine service flying operations", or "the taxpayer has a right to see how his money is being spent". And there is the recruiting one to the effect that even if only one young man is inspired by an air show to join the air force, then it is all worthwhile.

As to the first of these, we doubt that service flying requires that low-level loops be performed in heavy jet aircraft with high wing loadings or that combat flying really calls for close formation rolls. One accident listed above happened when the pilot was practicing landing a Sabre out of the bottom of a loop. This is routine service flying?

In the second case, if the taxpayer takes a look at the above record, he might feel a little ill at the thought of how much of his money is being literally destroyed by unnecessary accidents.

Justification: The recruiting angle is a feeble argument. How can one justify the signing up of even ten recruits against the death of just one experienced aircrew? In one recent accident, a wing commander was killed. Consider this human tragedy cold-bloodedly: it costs the nation some \$60,000 just to bring a pilot to wings standard. What must it cost to train a man to assume the responsibilities of a wing commander?

We do not necessarily suggest that air displays be abruptly terminated. But we do think that the flying will have to be restricted to more conservative manoeuvres; that more regard will have to be paid to the limitations of the aircraft and pilots participating in these shows.

Sept 57

AIRPORT