

AIRCRAFT ENGINEERS - INTERNATIONAL

As long ago as 1955 the International Air Transport Association - I.A.T.A. - made it known, through bulletins issued by its Technical Committee, that it was opposed to the continuance of airworthiness control by national airworthiness authorities.

Air Safety is largely dependent upon the standards to which aircraft maintenance is performed. The current world wide system used to ensure that such standards are maintained at an acceptably high level involves the licensing of highly qualified aircraft engineers who carry out and certify for aircraft maintenance. This also involves a system of schedule maintenance and practices including training etc. which is supervised by the respective airworthiness authority.

This system necessarily places an element of restraint upon the operating and maintenance practices of airlines. Licensed Aircraft Engineers hold statutory authority which can be used to prevent the operation of aircraft which may because of certain unserviceabilities, be unairworthy to such an extent that could present a serious hazard. It is both a fact that considerable "commercial" pressure to operate such aircraft does occasionally exist, and a matter of record that attempts have been made to force such aircraft into service.

Air Transport is possibly the most competitive and demanding of all industries, and faced with the pressures of the need to get an aircraft into the air, it is understandable that an engineer's judgement can be influenced, particularly when that engineer is entirely dependent upon the favour of his employer for his job. It is the statutory authority of the Licensed Engineer that enables him to withstand such pressures and, though his actions might not always be in the strictest financial interests of his employer, to ensure the highest standards of safe aircraft maintenance. Similarly, supervision by airworthiness authorities often results in airlines being forced to perform maintenance and modification to aircraft which constitute a financial penalty but are essential to safe aircraft operation.

I.A.T.A.'s policy is to eliminate the control of airworthiness by present methods by reducing the activities of airworthiness authorities to limited surveillance; abolishing the licensing of aircraft engineers - substituting airline approval of engineers with much lower standards of technical expertise and knowledge and who, having no qualification or authority external to the airline itself, would be entirely dependent upon the good will of their superiors and therefore subject to insuperable pressures; abolishing the renewal of Airworthiness Certificates; and vesting the authority to determine what constitutes unserviceability and certification together with absolute authority and responsibility for airworthiness and maintenance standards in individual airlines.

The influence of I.A.T.A., and indeed individual national airlines, is tremendous and, regrettably, a number of airworthiness authorities have recently displayed willingness to abdicate their statutory responsibility for airworthiness standards in favour of I.A.T.A.'s policies. Fortunately Licensed Engineers throughout the world recognise the threat to air safety which exists in such a policy and have joined together to prevent its implementation. An international consortium, the provisional title of which is AIRCRAFT ENGINEERS - INTERNATIONAL, has been formed for this and other purposes.

The founder members of Aircraft Engineers - International are the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers' Association, the Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (U.K.), the All India Aircraft Engineers Association and (in a passive capacity only) the Society of Licensed Aircraft Engineers and Technologists, (N.Z.).

These organisations, with the exception of S.L.A.E.T. (N.Z.), are all registered professional trade unions in their respective countries. AE-I was formed and its provisional constitution established at a conference in Sydney in October 1971. Its headquarters are based in Sydney and its Secretariat provided by the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers' Association.

The principal objects of AE-I are:

The aims of the consortium to be industrial, technical and to cover matters of a professional and ethical nature.

To monitor all occurrences in world aviation, including any matter which may appear unrelated but which may indicate a definite pattern of dilution of air safety, aircraft maintenance engineer status and in particular any undesirable inroads into existing world licensing systems.

Communications to be established on a permanent and regular basis between international representatives of the consortium so as to monitor all trends, adverse or otherwise.

Industrial co-operation to be an immediate consideration. To be agreed that member organisations co-operate as a matter of principle with respect to each other's industrial problems.

Sanctions to be imposed on named operators who are in dispute with a member organisation. Such sanctions to be implemented at the request of the nominated international representative of the Association or organisation in the country of dispute with such assistance being provided to the extent requested.

All industrial/technical disputes and agreements arising therefrom which are reached by any member organisation with any operator shall be notified to the consortium. Such information shall be made available to all member organisations.

It is agreed that the consortium shall be entirely non-political and non-sectarian and shall only concern itself with the interests of air safety, aviation maintenance and maintenance-qualified personnel throughout the world.

Interest in AE-I has been shown by associations in several other countries and contact has been made with them. It is anticipated that the consortium will expand considerably in the next few months and will ultimately include the United States, Canada, Germany, Ceylon, South Africa, Malaysia and a number of other European, Middle East and African countries.

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D.G. COLEMAN,
FEDERAL SECRETARY.

AUSTRALIAN LICENSED AIRCRAFT
ENGINEERS' ASSOCIATION.

for

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