

EDITORIALS

The Policy Gap

HOW many times have you attended down-to-earth general aviation meetings and said to yourself: "Gee, but wouldn't it be great if Federal aviation officials, especially the policy makers, could listen in on what's going on?" Or how many times have you been to one of general aviation's truly great flying and static displays of aircraft and equipment such as Reading, NBAA or AOPA's annual and wondered if any higher-ups of Washington officialdom were around to observe the tremendous technical strides being made in this most dynamic field of air transportation?

How often have you listened to highly competent aviation leadership discuss current problems and their solution, wondering why those who either originate or endorse government policy were noticeable by their very absence?

Too often our government aviation officials, when they do show up for such meetings, appear only to deliver a speech or sit on a panel, then depart from the scene, too busy to hob-nob with the real knowledgeable brains in the business and find out what makes us click.

In our opinion the sporadic cat-and-dog fights on the Washington scene when differences in Federal policies do arise could be reduced many-fold by closer personal relations between government officials at the policy level and aviation leadership, who for the most part are seasoned and experienced men with both practical and technical backgrounds in every phase of airplane ownership and operations.

The "policy gap" derives from this lack of communication until it's too late — until the policy pronouncements are made and the debates come off in official hearings. It's about the worst and most costly system we could operate under and one of the principal reasons why such confrontations generate so much heat and so little light.

You only have to look to the constructive relationships that now exist between most state aviation agencies and the aviation public to appreciate what it means to enjoy the fruits of close contact between government and industry. State policy makers generally have the ear and the confidence of the people and industry they are involved with. Dialog is open and frequent. Most policy decisions are hammered out in state aeronautics meetings where consensus rather than conflict is both the issue and the result. It's accomplished by one thing and one thing only — intimate knowledge of common problems and frequent dialog. There's no ivory tower stuff.

General aviation enjoys a modicum of such dialog with many experienced men within the working force of the Federal Aviation Agency. But these knowledgeable people both in Washington and in the regions have little to say on top policy matters. And until their knowledge and experience are utilized by the FAA and the Department of Transportation, the policy makers themselves might well put a moratorium on speech making all over the landscape and attend the business sessions at our more productive aviation meetings as simple auditors. Otherwise the policy gap will get wider rather than narrower and the personal contact so desperately needed in times like these will only serve to compound our problems.

Perhaps with a change in the Administration due for next January, we can start all over in establishing a mutually profitable relationship between civil aviation and the policy makers. Liaison between the DOT-FAA and Washington representatives of the various branches of the industry is an important link in the chain but until the broader base liaison as suggested here is applied, we will continue to fritter away much time and large sums of money trying to

justify general aviation's points of view as regards its rightful place in a highly complex national transportation system. Neither Uncle Sam nor the industry can longer engage in frequent shooting wars and name-calling every

time a problem or air traffic crisis arises. The time is over-ripe not only for a change in administration but a radical change in industry-government relations to close the costly policy gap once and for all.

Wings of Hope

THE growing use of lightplanes for the relief of human misery by small medical missionary outposts in the deserts, jungles and mountain fastnesses of the world, far removed from modern civilization as most of us know it today, is a glorious beacon of light in a militaristic age more characterized by violence and brutality than by compassion and brotherly love.

We would point specifically to the work of a non-profit organization known as Wings of Hope, Inc., based in St. Louis, Missouri, that has just placed two float-equipped airplanes into the upper reaches of the Amazon River of South America. This organization is an outgrowth of the UMATT group that did similar yeoman service in raising funds and placing aircraft for medical mission support in the desert and jungle country of East Africa some years back.

A considerable amount of money for both UMATT and Wings of Hope came from the U. S. aviation community. In the Wings of Hope South American operation, substantial financial support has been evident from Canada.

Wings of Hope aircraft and services are not for hire, nor will they ever be. No government agency, no field service organization, no foreign missionary group can "call the shots" on its operation. The organization's qualified field director programs the service according to priority needs in the local area. Thus, no deserving group is ever knowingly denied the desperately needed

service where 20 minutes of flying time often replaces 8 or 9 hours by boat or powered canoe. It is an inter-faith airline serving the cause of international brotherhood, relieving human suffering, helping emerging peoples to a more hopeful future.

Here is one report from priest-pilot Father Guy Gervais: "Last Saturday I received a message from Masan on the Amazon in the deepest jungle that a woman was dying. The husband had walked days through the jungle to get the message out. In 20 minutes we were there — ordinarily a nine-hour trip by boat. We flew the patient to the Iquitos Hospital in time. The people opened their eyes when I answered to their question: 'Will it be very expensive?' I told them: 'It is our pleasure to fly you gratis to help you today at this hour of sorrow. Say a prayer for our friends in the USA'."

With death raining from the skies in war, these unsung heroes serving with little or no pay in the purest sort of humanitarian effort with little airplanes deserve all possible backing.

You can be a part of this rewarding effort, a bona fide "stockholder" in Wings of Hope, Inc., by sending in your donation, large or small to the organization, 2319 Hampton Avenue, St. Louis, Mo., 63139. The need for more airplanes and communications equipment is urgent. We'll give an Oklahoma guarantee you'll get value received at least ten times over, maybe more!

Tribute To Mexico

THE very alert National Business Aircraft Association on occasion of its 21st annual meeting in Houston last month presented an appropriate "In Memoriam" resolution to the people of Mexico on the untimely passing of Ing. Ramon Perez Morquecho, Director General of Civil Aviation of that country. Under his able guidance, some 35 VOR's were installed to up-date air navigation in Mexico. NBAA also cited Morquecho for designating many inland cities as ports of entry for aircraft, expediting border crossing.

"Through his dedicated efforts," the resolution states, "the good neighbor policies of Mexico and the United States were extended and enhanced, commerce was increased and interna-

tional friendship widely extended."

While postscripting this splendid gesture, it should be noted that our own Federal Aviation Administration worked hand-in-glove with Mexico's civil aviation director in establishing the new facilities and special commendation should go to Henry S. Newman, FAA's southwest regional director.

"Frank" Newman is typical of our hard core public servants in the FAA's field organization that never hits the headlines, but attends to the daily problems, jobs and responsibilities of the FAA, regardless of whose Administration sits at the top. Their good work as exemplified in this international cooperation with our Mexican friends deserves recognition.