

General McKee. My point is that when the air traffic control system, including the air traffic controllers, can no longer reasonably and sensibly handle the traffic, and they limit them right now. When they reach the limit point at La Guardia or J. F. K., that the reason a lot of airplanes at Washington National, when the weather is bad in New York, just sit on the ramp out here, because they can't handle them in New York.

Mr. BROWN. How many flights would that be a minute?

General McKee. Would all depend on what the airport is, what the weather is, and if you have got a better answer, Mr. Thomas, you are controller.

Mr. THOMAS. No, sir; it depends entirely upon the operation. For example, just for noise reasons alone, JFK can go down to half its normal operations under one wind condition as opposed to another.

Washington National can drop down to half, depending on weather, and whether you land to the south or north, so this is why we have empowered the controller to impose what we call full control, and when he says that he has no further room for the airplanes, or it is getting out of land, he just skirts the flow off. He does this all over the United States; he does it right now.

Mr. BROWN. I am not sure that answers my question. Is the critical factor the aircraft traffic controller and the capacity of the air traffic controller to handle the traffic, depending upon the situation?

General McKee. That is right. And he judges, and he shuts it off, and he is the umpire.

Mr. BROWN. But it is the controller.

General McKee. Yes, sir.

Mr. BROWN. Who is the critical breakdown point. Is that right?

General McKee. Well, he is the one that determines it. It may be a blocked runway. It may be an instrument landing system out. It may be the weather went to low minimums, but he is the one that determines when capacity has been reached, and he needs to divert, or to stop traffic.

Mr. BROWN. If I could just pursue the point one step further, Mr. Chairman, what I am really asking is that without radar, the air traffic controller may have a certain point at which congestion becomes too great for him to handle.

With radar, that point may be a little higher. In other words, an increased amount of traffic, with radar, and bad wind conditions, or something else, but the critical factor is the air traffic controller, in his capacity to handle the traffic; is that right? Under the circumstances?

General McKee. I think we are playing on words. If we have no radar we will operate 10 to 15 per hour. With radar, the wind in the right direction, we will go 90 an hour. It is the same controller; he is as capable and is as busy under one time as he is the other.