

Even if automation is eventually as successful as the most optimistic engineers rosiely predict, it is still more than five years away for most ATC facilities.

Anyone who thinks that future automation will eliminate the current urgent need for more manpower in air traffic control is simply whistling in the dark. The long-range impact automation will have on ATC manpower needs is, at best, an educated guess. But the impact of recruiting and training new controllers now is a precise matter. Even the cost-benefitniks should be able to figure so simple an equation.

We have today a serious manpower shortage in the air traffic control system. This year's false economy may well be reflected in the tragic headlines of tomorrow.

One year ago, on this same page, we closed our editorial with this question: "No doubt the recent accidents will spur things along, but must improvement always come only as the aftermath of tragedy?"

Aviation history is on the bring of repeating itself. While everyone else in aviation is moving ahead vigorously, planning for the future and preparing for the greatest expansion the industry has ever known, the air traffic control system is again on the brink of slipping several years further behind. Shades of the fifties!

It's time to stop this nonsense about personnel freezes and niggardly savings in an agency that is so critical to both the national defense and the safety of the traveling public. If FAA cannot immediately begin to gird the controller ranks with talented and trained young men, the next decade will be another ignominious example of the folly of playing fiscal brinkmanship with air safety.

In our view, there are three major areas requiring immediate attention:

1. The acquisition of at least 2,000 additional air traffic personnel to be placed in training to fill the presently existing gaps and to gird for the coming expansion.

2. Major emphasis must be placed on an airport construction program, which I understand will be reviewed in depth by a Senate subcommittee this week, under the chairmanship of Senator Monroney. The Congress must understand that an expanded airport system will necessarily also entail additional air traffic control facilities, equipment and manpower.

3. An accelerated implementation program on the National Aviation System, now underway by FAA. This program, however, cannot be accelerated unless the Appropriations Committees of the Congress recognize the need for immediate action and provide funds for this purpose.

In summation, Mr. Chairman, we have confidence in the Federal Aviation Administration to get the job done if it is given the support it needs, unhampered by cost effectiveness experts who place economics ahead of all other factors, including increased safety. I should add, Mr. Chairman, that this Association has had many disagreements with the Federal Aviation Administration, and we expect to have many more in the future. At the same time, we recognize the limitations placed on the agency by the Administration, the cost of the Viet Nam war, and other factors which dictate an economy program not compatible with the purpose of this hearing which is, as I understand it, "Increased Safety."

Mr. FRIEDEL. Is anyone here from the Air Line Stewards and Stewardesses Association? Is Donald Madole, Esq., National Press Building, here?

(No response.)

Mr. FRIEDEL. Well, the meeting will stand adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.

The hearings will be continued at a later date.

(Whereupon, at 11:10 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.)