

AVIATION: TOURIST CLASS

Overseas Service in Its First Summer Trial Proves a Great Success for All Airlines

By FREDERICK GRAHAM

THE first returns on trans-Atlantic tourist-class flights were read off last week by the International Air Transport Association at its meeting in Geneva and there can be no doubt that the three-month trial period was a great success. Sir William P. Hildred, director-general of I. A. T. A., said that the tourist-class flights between the United States and Europe during May, June and July "triumphantly demonstrated" the soundness of the low-cost service.

During the three-month period about 150,000 persons flew the Atlantic on tourist-class and regular-fare planes. In the same period in 1951, when there was only the regular-fare service, about 100,000 passengers flew the same routes.

The 50 per cent increase in passenger volume was not made at the expense of regular-fare service, either, which some airline people feared. Regular-fare passenger volume increased nearly 20 per cent over the mark for the corresponding period of 1951, according to Sir William.

One of the most significant features of the new tourist service, Sir William said, was the gain of 50 per cent in passenger listings with only a 10 per cent increase in the number of flights. The tourist-class flights, of course, were flying with full or nearly full passenger loads all the time.

Strike in May

Exactly how big the tourist-class volume would have been if the lines had not been forced to cut out many schedules during May, when fuel refinery workers in this country were on strike, no one can say for sure. It is a safe estimate, according to some airline people, that several thousand more passengers would have been carried in May if all scheduled flights had been made.

Pan American World Airways, largest of the international lines, reported that from May 1 to Aug. 15 of 1951 it flew a total of 29,000 passengers across the Atlantic on its regular-fare planes. For the same period of this year, Pan American reported it flew 22,000 first-class and 21,000 tourist-class although it canceled many flights during May because of the oil workers' strike.

Tourist-class fares, based on the New York-London fare of \$486 round-trip, represent a big savings to travelers but more than that they open up the field to a whole new class of tourists. The fare of \$486 tourist-class is quite an at-

traction when compared with the regular round-trip fare of \$711.

The sharp cut in fare is made possible by putting more seats in each plane, cutting out the frills and then selling all of the seats. The planes, the crews and the operating procedures are exactly the same on tourist and regular-fare planes—but there are no elaborate meals, no berths and no lounge for sitting and chatting.

Extension of Service

Tourist fares are an even bigger bargain during the winter season. From Nov. 1 to May 1, the round-trip New York-London tourist rate will be \$417 against \$526.40, the off-season reduced first-class rate. This will completely displace the reduced excursion rate the airlines offered in the past for round-trip tickets good for a two-week period between January and March.

The airlines do not now have all of the planes they would like and they still have the basic transportation problems of "high peaks and low valleys" and payloads in both directions of travel.

Speaking of the planes, Sir William told the I. A. T. A. meeting: "As a rule it is the more modern aircraft which is suitable for tourist service, since it has been designed to make maximum use of cabin space and give reasonable comfort consistent with high seating capacity."

As for the seasonal ebb and flow of traffic, Sir William suggested some sort of exchange of equipment and flight personnel among lines when one has more traffic than it can handle and another has very little.

With a whole year to promote tourist service for next summer, plus the experience of the winter tourists, the airlines look forward to an even better season next year. Some of them will have more planes and all will have had the experience of this year's effort.

IDLEWILD TOWER

The tallest radio control tower in the United States was dedicated and put into service at New York International Airport, Idlewild, Queens, last week by the Port of New York Authority. The new tower, 150 feet high or about the height of an eleven-story building, was built at a cost of \$1,000,000 and is one of the most completely equipped towers in the world. In addition to normal radio and radar, the tower has a radarscope that permits the operators to observe and direct traffic on the ground at any part of the field when the weather is bad.