

LETTERS TO ... THE EDITOR

Editor Dear Sirs: There are lots of suckers in the world and I am the biggest. My business is aviation, not politics, and my life and interest for more than two decades have been devoted to the development of aviation and private flying. During the last war when flying over this Flight Strip, it occurred to me that there was an ideal, naturally situated spot that could bring to reality a dream for the private flyer. Ideas began to formulate and plans took shape in the way of drawings, photographs, maps, etc.

After the war ended, the City of Torrance started the procedure of acquiring the field from the Government, which was a long drawn-out battle. The City succeeded in acquiring a "interim permit" which gave them possession of the field pending the executing of the "quit-claim" deed. I was made manager of the airport under a temporary contract until a permanent contract would be arranged. Thus the first step of my "dream" was accomplished.

It soon became apparent that the City was not the least interested in aviation and the acquisition of the airport was strictly a matter of business, a chance to get something for nothing. I tried to convince and prove to them that here was an asset that could be made to reflect great credit to the City, give them national advertisement, and at the same time promote aviation. This was possible without any cost to the City. It would be a pioneering job but the result would justify the effort, if it could just be kept immune from "political paralysis."

I look over the management on May 28, 1947. Of course, I had only a temporary contract,

but things had to get started if the "dream" were to materialize. The first and most important job was to clear up the place and remove fire hazards from all over the place, and to establish order and organization from the then existing wild chaos. The results soon began to show as the class of tenants and airplanes improved steadily. That was a good response and very satisfying. I was very happy the day I was able to personally deliver the "quit-claim" deed into the hands of the City, as I felt that now development could really start. I completed drawing up the Master Plan which was approved by the CAA. I did not yet have a permanent contract but was led to believe it would be only a matter of a short time.

Considerable equipment would be needed to carry out the development as planned. For a time it was possible to acquire airport equipment through the WAA without cost, so this had to be obtained while it was available. I spent a lot of effort on this and obtained for the airport, equipment the WAA valuation of which is approximately \$80,000.00. The City took for its own use, the fire engine that was on the airport and also another one I acquired for the airport through War Assets Administration. To replace these, they sent one of antique vintage to the airport. The contract under which all this equipment was transferred stipulates that it must remain on the airport. I was instructed by the City Manager to loan a bulldozer from the airport to do some back filling at another location. This I refused to do.

Symptoms of "political paralysis" began to appear. The airport was discussed occasionally but received no consideration or interest. I solicited the cooperation of the Chamber of Com-

merce but it has never been forthcoming. My prospect file for aviation operations on the airport would fatten and then thin out as time went on and nothing was done about the airport.

This situation has existed for two years and the development of the airport has been retarded immeasurably. I would say, conservatively, that the City has lost \$100 a day in possible airport revenue due to this procrastination and lack of interest by the City. They did finally instruct the City Attorney to write and publish some airport ordinances. These were ridiculous and outdated some twenty years. Some of them were in direct contradiction to CAA rulings for this field and were not workable.

The City permitted a non-scheduled operator on the field without proper insurance to protect the City. I brought this to their attention time after time, but the matter went disregarded, and this operator continued to fly passengers off this unlighted field after dark making the City liable for possible damage suits running into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The airport has approximately \$1,500 in delinquent accounts. I do not have the authority to take legal action to collect and the City would not, or even make it possible for me to do so. As an example of the lack of interest in the airport, up until six months ago, it is doubtful if the new city officials had ever even read my contract with the City.

This political disease became so prevalent that rumors were passed around that I was infected with it and "had a deal." Fortunately, I have been able to keep from contracting this horrible germ which can be so disastrous. Political paralytic colonies like leper colonies should be established for the protection of society.

In spite of the fact that the airport was being drawn into

the advanced stages of this dreaded disease, I have during the 22 months of management, been able to turn in to the City, cash rentals totaling \$24,324.85, besides the inventory of equipment, which incidentally, has not received consideration enough from the City to provide shelter for it. The City after paying such expenses as insurance, etc. has more than \$2,500.00 with all expenses paid. The airport has never at any time required a cent of City funds. The airport revenue for 1948 showed an increase of 20% over 1947, and so far, this year has shown an increase of 25% over 1948. My commissions for the 22 months totaled \$15,804.61, out of which I paid airport maintenance.

This political disease became so deep rooted that complications in the form of "political fear" developed. As a result, instead of permitting the airport development to go ahead on a sound, tested, businesslike basis as originally planned, advanced bids went out for bids. These bids were to be made on a "joker" contract which made sure there was no chance for

the airport to ever be out of politics. It began to look more and more as if this thing were incurable and getting to the irrational stage, but I was being assured by Council Members that everything was going to work out all right.

With full knowledge of what would be required to develop this airport properly according to the Master Plan, and with many years experience in airport operation and development, it was impossible for me to agree to some of the provisions set forth in this "joker" contract.

With faint hope that some sane thinking might come out of this political delirium, I again submitted my CAA approved contract which had been pronounced fair and workable by many eminent aviation authorities. However, this disease was too far advanced now and had deviated two years of hard effort to getting the groundwork laid, drew up the Master Plan which has been copied by the City and kept the airport on a profitable basis under extremely adverse conditions, I was inter-

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viewed just fifteen minutes and my contract discarded.

Death appears inevitable for this poor victim of these political diseases and the grave is already being dug. Who will do the embalming?

What can the carriers of these vicious germs be thinking? Is it, "We got the airport for nothing, we got all this equipment for nothing, now, if we can hook a fish to carry-on for nothing?" Poor fish that got caught!

I'm a sucker, but I didn't bite on that one!
E. Tarkington

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