

ICAO FRANKING AND POSTAL PRIVILEGES

by Albert Pelsser



Figure 1

At its 5th Session of the Assembly, held in Montreal from 5 to 18 June 1951, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) adopted resolution A5-13 by which the Council, the governing body of ICAO composed of 21 Member States at that time, was invited to try to reach an agreement with the Government of Canada for the granting of franking or other postal privileges, expecting some economy in the cost of mailing official correspondence.

Prior to that, a suggestion for a similar arrangement had been made in the first draft of the Headquarters agreement presented by ICAO to the Canadian Government on 24 March 1948. Section 13 of that draft reads as follows: "Pending any general arrangement concerning the establishment of a postal service of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies, the appropriate Canadian Authorities shall issue special stamps for the use of the Organization."

The above suggestion was based on the experience gained prior to the second world war by the League of Nations and the International Labour Office in Switzerland. Arrangements had also been concluded between the Government of Switzerland and a few Agencies concerning the use of stamps with an overprint corresponding to the Organization concerned.

After the adoption of Resolution 454(V) by the

General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) on 16 November 1950, the signing of an agreement between the USA and the UN on 28 March 1951 permitted the UN Postal Administration to go into operation; the first stamp was released on United Nations Day, i.e. 24 October 1951. The first and most famous Canadian connection in the UN philately (Scott #31-32) came into being with the issue related to ICAO on 9 February 1955 (Figures 1,2).



Figure 2

On 7 August 1951, ICAO's Assembly resolution was submitted to the Post Office Department, which felt that it could not undertake to extend franking privileges to ICAO, as the postal law and regulations restricted such privileges to senators, members of parliament and to federal



Figure 3

government departments.

On 12 December 1951, as it was felt that the original submission had not been clearly stipulated, ICAO requested that the question be reconsidered by the Post Office Department, along the lines of arrangements between the Swiss Government and various international organizations, i.e. the use of national stamps with an overprinting, stamps to be sold, used or unused, to philatelists for their collections exclusively. Again, the Post Office expressed serious objections to the proposed arrangements and recalled that the primary object of producing postage stamps was to prepay postage and that philatelic use should be merely incidental.

In the meantime, a resolution was adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) requesting the specialized agencies to submit any proposal which may be made by them concerning postal activities to the Secretary General of the UN for consultation with the Universal Postal Union (UPU). As this resolution did not prohibit ICAO from concluding an agreement with the Canadian Authorities, discussions were taken up in 1953 with them on re-examining the question of issuing stamps with an ICAO overprint or special stamps. In November 1953, the Canadian Post Office indicated that it could not turn over any portion of the proceeds resulting from the sale of ICAO stamps issued for purely philatelic purposes; it was nevertheless prepared to overprint stamps of its normal issues for ICAO pre-payment of postage and was also ready to mark special dates such as the tenth anniversary of the Organization's existence in Canada by the

issue of a special stamp for general use which could be overprinted for use by ICAO or philatelic interests.

On 12 January 1954, a specific committee on postal matters was created at ICAO to make recommendations on the above issues. This committee felt that the estimate of the revenue that might be expected by ICAO from philatelic sales might not be sufficient to make the project worthwhile. The committee assessed the probable philatelic demand for ICAO service stamps taking into consideration the main factors affecting this demand, i.e. the selling price, the number of different denominations, the introduction of new issues, the philatelic interest and the marketing channels. Moreover, it was felt that the issue of an ICAO commemorative stamp might provide a suitable opportunity for stimulating philatelic interest, as well as appraising the results of philatelic sales for an overprinted commemorative stamp (trial scheme); ICAO would act as a stamp dealer to sell the overprinted stamps at prices it considered suitable. In considering this matter, the ICAO Council did not accept the offer of the Postmaster General to arrange for overprinting of regular issues of Canadian postage stamps, as it should not engage in philatelic sales as an accessory means of financing; this recommendation brought an end to the discussions related to stamp overprinting and franking privileges for ICAO.

However, as a compensation, the suggestion made by the Post Office to issue a commemorative stamp was positively received at ICAO; a stamp could be considered for the 10th anniversary of the inception of the Organization in August 1955, rather than the tenth anniversary of the

(Provisional) Organization's installation in Canada (June 1945). It was later suggested that the first day of issue coincide with the second day of ICAO's 9th Session of the Assembly, i.e. 1 June 1955.

In April 1954, the ICAO Secretary General invited staff members to submit suitable suggestions and designs (for the United Nations Postal Administration and the Canadian Post Office). Twelve designs submitted by five competitors were evaluated by the ICAO special committee on postal matters; Mr. Maurice St. Onge, a Cartographic Draftsman in the Aeronautical Charts Section of ICAO, was granted the first prize of \$50 for the design shown at Figure 3. On the basis on the three best designs submitted by ICAO, the Post Office commissioned an artist to submit his ideas on how the subject should be handled. The resulting

design was re-drafted by ICAO as per Figure 4, to avoid presenting too many similarities with the Canadian stamp Scott #343 (Gannet in flight); it is to be noted that the word *organisation* was spelled in English with the letter S (older spelling), which was an error as ICAO's official name had always been spelled with the letter Z.

On the initiative of Mr. Karl Lohse, the Chief of ICAO's Aeronautical Charts Section, his brother Walter Lohse, Assistant Art Director of the Gazette Printing Company, reworked the draft and completed the design for the final issue which is described in the following paragraph. Born in Belgium in January 1897, Walter Lohse began his career as a technical engineer, but discovered later that he was a better artist than an engineer. He came to Canada in 1930 and joined *The Gazette* in 1942. Figure 5

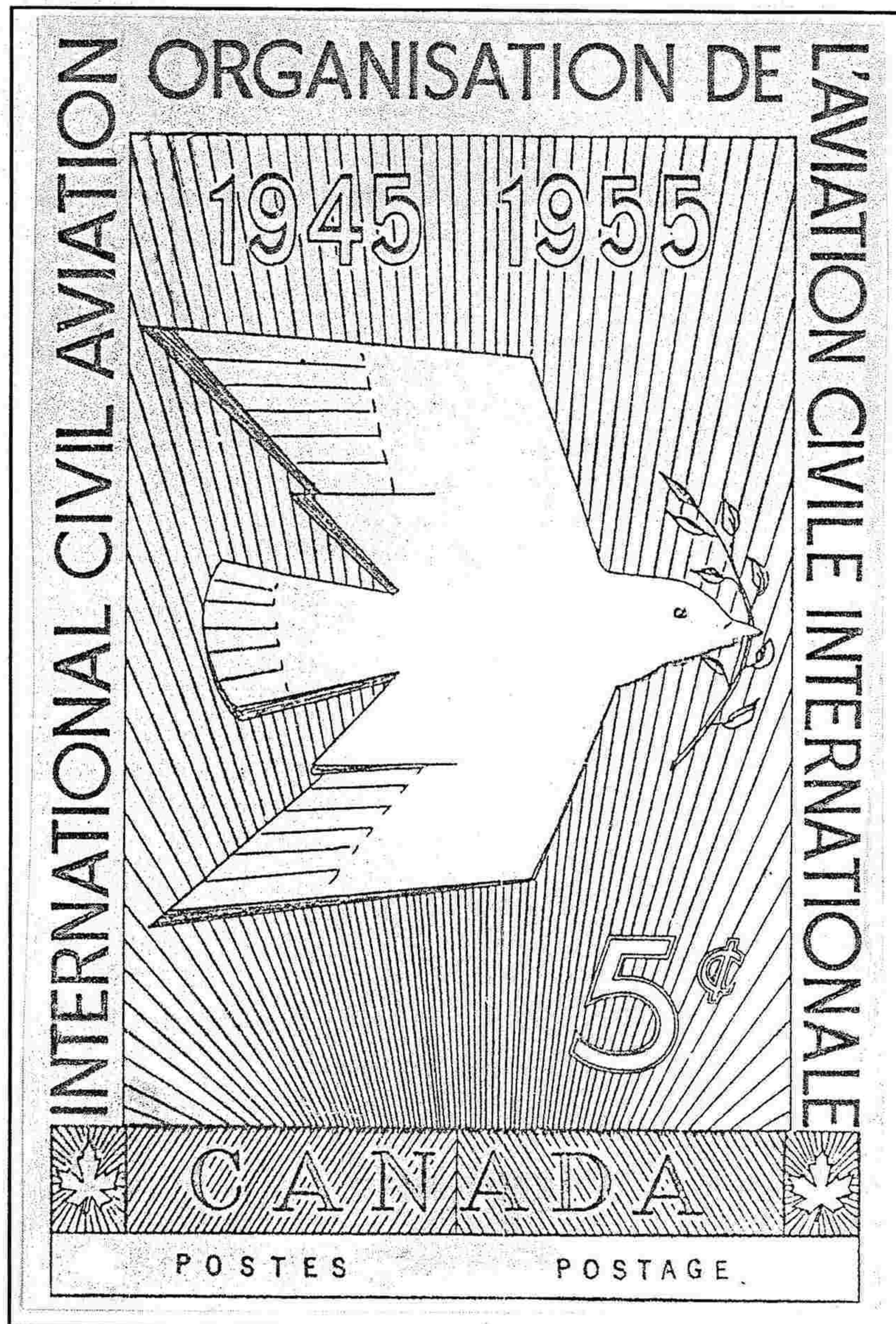


Figure 4



Figure 5

shows the complimentary folder presenting Canada Scott #354 designed by Walter Lohse.

The oval form of the stamp design made it possible to obliterate the letters Z (in English) and S (in French) of the word *organization* on the top of oval. Repeating this word had not seemed desirable as the English and French texts of the Organization's full name differed in length which would have made it necessary to off-centre the text. The flame of a torch, centred at the top of the oval and placed over the missing letter, represents the guiding light of the Organization. A dove, symbolic bird of peace, is flying to the right and upward, symbolizing a progressive development of civil aviation in the right direction. The underlined word CANADA forms the base stability. A

branch of three maple leaves, taken from the Canadian Coat of Arms, forms a link between the base (Canada) and the Organization. The corners of the stamp have purposely been left blank to give air to the design. The blue colour of the stamp is a normal association with the sky.

The message conveyed by the above stamp is in perfect harmony with the aims and objectives outlined in the Chicago Convention (i.e. ICAO's Charter), stating that ICAO would be the world's aviation regulatory authority creating and preserving friendship and understanding among nations and peoples. Finally, this stamp paid tribute to ICAO's work towards improvement of safety and regularity in international air transport during the first ten years of its existence.

REFERENCE

United Nations Postage Stamps, UN Department of Public Information, New York, 1956.

CHECKLIST

Canada	354	1955 Jun 01	10 th Anniversary of ICAO's inception
United Nations	31-32	1955 Feb 09	10 th Anniversary of the interim Agreement and first PICAQ Meeting

