

THE STORY BEHIND THE ICAO CARD

by Albert Pelsser

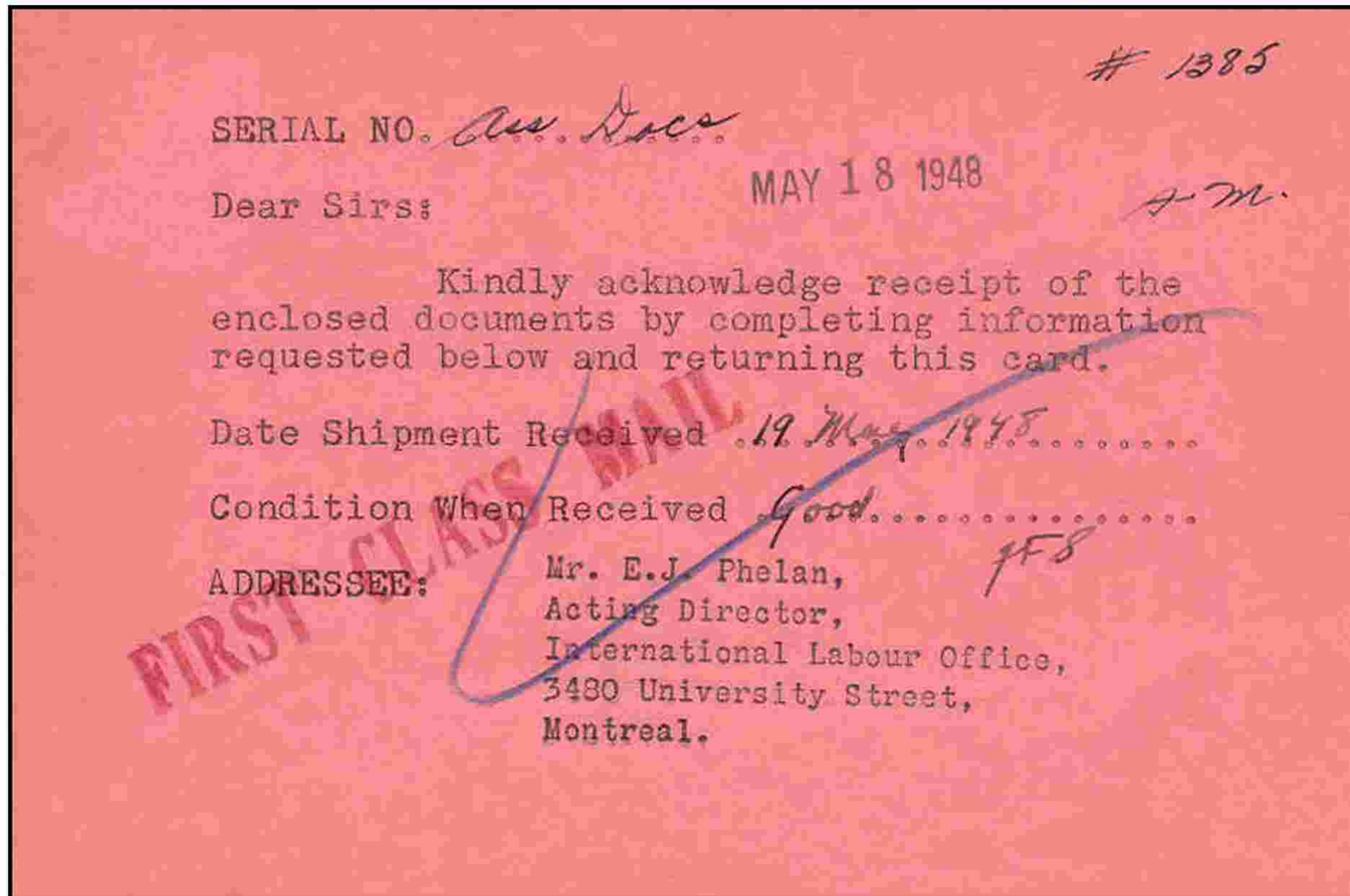


Figure 1

The postcard at Figure 1 gives the story of the first shrink-wrapping machine used by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Since its beginnings as the Provisional Organization in August 1945 in Montreal, where it was established further to the Chicago Conference, documentation and publications of all sorts had to be sent from Montreal to civil aviation authorities in states which

had adhered to the *Chicago Convention*, civil aviation bodies, various institutions, private and public companies, etc.

While shopping in 1947 in a pharmacy in downtown Montreal, Mr. Harold Vaage, who was the Supervisor of the Distribution Section at ICAO at that time, had noticed toothbrushes that were shrink-wrapped. When investigating

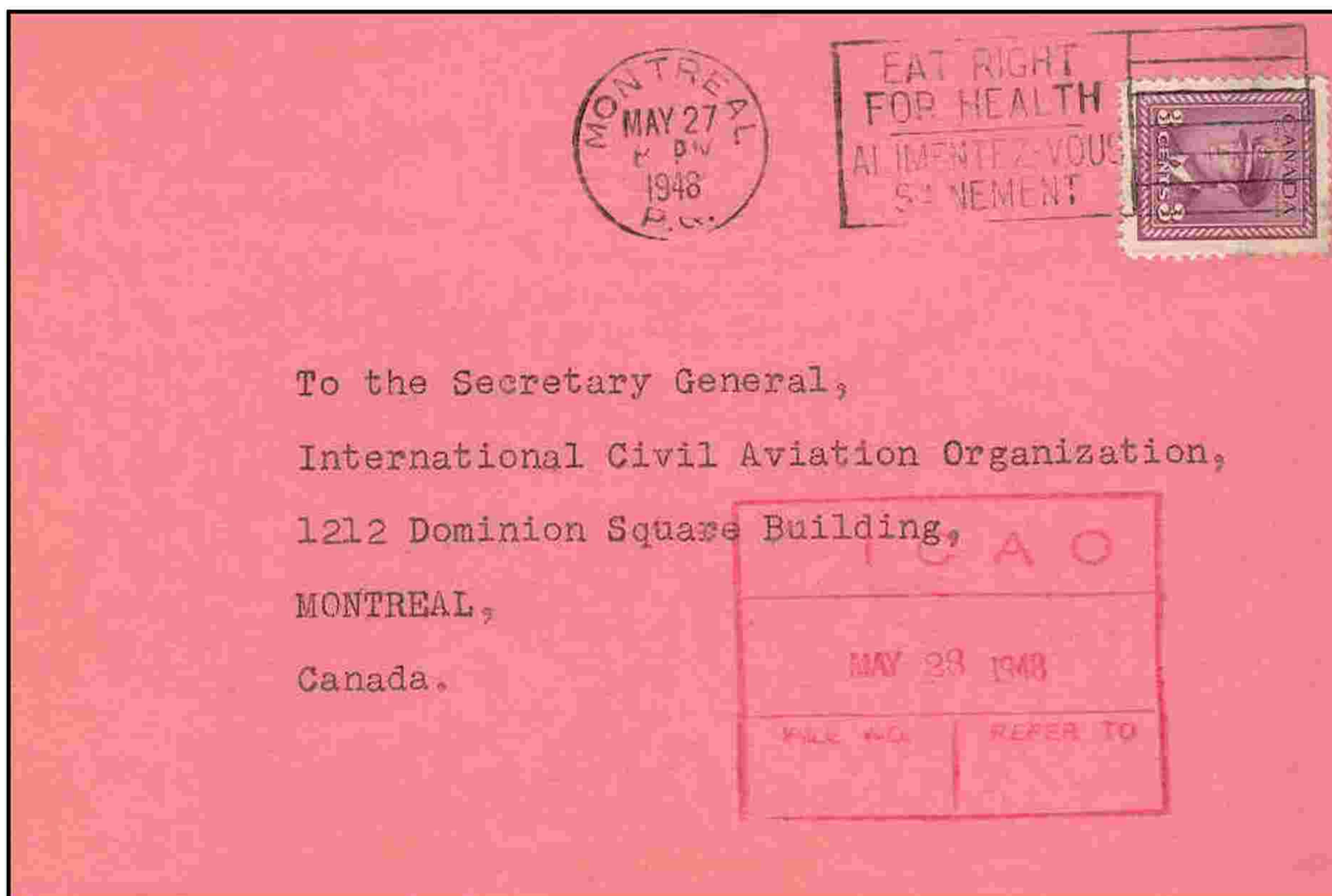


Figure 2

about the machine used for that wrapping, he got in touch with its manufacturer in the U.S.A., ACME Machinery. ICAO then commissioned that company to design and develop a shrink-wrapping machine specially adapted for ICAO's packaging needs. The machine was delivered in early 1948 at the cost of CAN\$2,500. To measure the efficiency of the new shipping procedure, the addressee of the package was asked to fill in the receiving date and condition of the shipment on a pink card (see Figure 1) and return it to ICAO's Headquarters, located at that time in the Dominion Square Building, Montreal.

At that time, a red receiving stamp was applied to the incoming mail. The positioning of "ICAO" on the rubber stamp (see Figure 2) was off to the right and clearly indicates that the stamp had been in use at the time of PICAQ, the letter "P," which preceded the other letters, having been cut out of the stamp when ICAO came into being on 7 April 1947.

It is particularly interesting to note that the implementation of the first ever shrink-wrapping machine for packages at ICAO was so successful that the UN acquired a similar piece of equipment immediately thereafter. ❁