

# A Gander refuelling puzzle

(by Robert G Pelley, 2019-02-26)  
<http://bobsganderhistory.com>

It is fairly well known that the civilian airlines in post-war Gander were serviced in aviation fuel and oil by two different companies. One of them was of course Imperial Esso and its predecessor Intava. The other was Royal Dutch Shell.

The story of Esso in Gander can be seen here:  
<http://bobsganderhistory.com/ESSO.pdf>

The Shell adventure is explained here:  
<http://bobsganderhistory.com/shellv2.pdf>

As a rough rule, British and European airline companies tended to favour Shell, while, on the other hand, American companies tended to opt for Esso products. Of course the price per gallon was much more important than loyalty to country.

The story of which airlines used which oil company can be found here:  
<http://bobsganderhistory.com/refuelold.pdf>

But sometimes something comes along that can leave you scratching your head. The photo below is one such case.

Here we have what appears to be a very normal scene of an Air France Constellation on the ramp immediately south of hangar 22. With the trucks parked just in front of the engines, it would seem to be the usual refuelling operation.



But a close-up reveals something else:



On the left of the Constellation, one can clearly see a Shell fuel truck ready to do its job. However, very surprisingly, on closer inspection, the right-hand of the photo also shows a fuel truck from Esso!

There is not much really going on in this photo, except a group of men standing around chatting. Maybe they are planning to flip a coin to see who will actually do the job?

So what could be going on here?

Shell Oil had the contract for Air France and kept until Air France left Gander. Most likely, the Shell Oil truck was there for refuelling purposes, while the Esso truck was just passing by, going back to its parking spot near the hangar after serving another aircraft.