

Editorial

ON THE HORIZON

The discussions which took place at the recent meeting of NATO defence ministers are of particular interest to Canada's Aircraft Industry because they seem to suggest that they could lead to a considerable amount of new business. Statements credited to Defence Minister George Pearkes following his return to Canada could bring one to the conclusion that within in very short time the RCAF's Air Division in Europe either will have to be re-equipped with more modern aircraft of higher performance, or existing equipment will have to be fitted with air-to-air guided missile armament which will perform the function of an "equalizer".

Diminishing Capability: The background to this speculation is this: For some time, the capability of the Air Division to cope with the threat of a bomber attack has been diminishing at an accelerating rate. This is, obviously, due to the fact that new bomber types now entering or soon to enter service, are of such advanced performance that it is doubtful if they could be effectively intercepted by current RCAF aircraft.

Faced with this development, NATO considered the possibility of converting the Air Division to a low level tactical ground support role; turning its aircraft into nuclear weapons carriers.

It is understood that this idea was rejected by NATO, which would like to see the Canadian force continue in its present role. This role is that of a frontline high level interceptor force and is one that the Air Division has filled with a high degree of efficiency. The knowledge that it bears the responsibility of stopping the first blows at Europe has resulted in strikingly high morale and *esprit de corps*. The Air Division has come to be regarded as an elite corps, and in fact regards itself as such.

This is the spirit that the NATO high command is keen to preserve. To preserve it they must avoid any action which even suggests a downgrading in role. Consequently, it has been indicated, NATO wants the Air Division to keep on doing what it has been doing for the past several years. And if it is to do this, one of the two actions mentioned in a preceding paragraph will have to be taken.

Choice of Weapons: If the Air Division is to get air-to-air missiles, a revival of the CF-100 Mk. 6, or at least its missile-carrying features, becomes a possibility. Since the Mk. 6 was being developed to carry the Sparrow 2, now going into production in Canada, it seems logical that Air Division CF-100's would be armed with this weapon. But what about the Sabres? The Sparrow seems like a logical choice here, too, as Douglas says that it can be used on both dayfighters and all-weather interceptors. However, such infra-red weapons as the de Havilland Firestreak and the Philco Sidewinder should not be discounted as possibilities.

Should the decision be to re-equip the Air Division with a new aircraft type, the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter immediately springs to mind. The difficulty here would appear to be a matter of time. There is room for doubt that such airplanes could be obtained soon enough, either as off-the-shelf purchases from Lockheed, or under a license-built scheme. On the other hand, Canadair was turning out Sabres within a year of the contract being inked.

Whatever the outcome of these new developments, it should result in new work for Canada's Aircraft Industry.

EAVESDROPPING

•Overheard on TCA's DC-3 service to Victoria from Vancouver, as one passenger explained to another the function of the static wick dischargers at the wingtips: "They're so the pilot can check to see if the rain is draining off the wings properly."

•One airport sightseer to another, as a North Star taxied by: "Man, listen to those engines tick over . . . just like a big Lincoln."

"Yeah, but they got nothing on those American rotary engines."