

editorial

Dropping CF-100 Mark 6 Will Hit Industry Hard

The Defense Department has now indicated its intention to drop the CF-100 Mark 6 program.

The saving in defense spending which is said to have dictated this decision will be realized at the expense of irreplaceable development time, an expense which the Canadian aviation industry can ill afford.

Not only must Avro Aircraft Ltd. abandon a production line reportedly almost ready to roll, but Orenda Engines Ltd. must reassess plans which included supplying Orenda 11s with after burners in production quantities. Further, a large number of subcontractors are faced with the prospect of a period of inactivity in research and production facilities, many of them recently acquired additions.

The most galling aspect of the government proposal is that a large segment of the industry is being asked not to abandon hope and seek greener fields elsewhere, but to mark time, to hold off on further development and engineering until another vehicle is ready.

For if the Hon. George Pearkes, VC, Minister of National Defense, was speaking frankly at last month's Avro CF-105 roll-out, he and his advisers see the Arrow in both its interceptor and tactical roles playing an important part in North American defense for some years to come. It follows then, that the Canadian industry will be expected to supply the systems and armament to fit the Arrow into a modern defense establishment.

Nothing has transpired to alter the opinion expressed in these columns last month when the government's recently announced decision to abandon the CF-100 Mark 6 program was still an unconfirmed rumour. The immediate economies of the move will be more than offset by costly losses in development time on an effective airborne missile system which could mean the difference on the overall success of the CF-105 Arrow project, at least as far as full participation of the Canadian industry is concerned.

Assistance on Fleet Modernization

Society of British Aircraft Constructors' President C. F. Uwins of Bristol Aircraft Ltd. expressed a thought which would bear careful examination by Canadian government authorities in his address at the SBAC banquet during Farnborough week.

Mr. Uwins urged that the Government give careful consideration to some plan under which the military requirement for transport aircraft in time of emergency could be tied to the need for commercial operators to build up fleets of modern airliners.

The thought is by no means new to Canadian officials. From time to time suggestions have been advanced from various sources regarding a Canadian counterpart of the United States plan under which airlines are assisted in the purchase of aircraft with the understanding that the military will have immediate priority on the machine in the event of an emergency.

Many Canadian operators would welcome such an opportunity to modernize their equipment. The mutual benefit to the operator and the defense program is obvious.