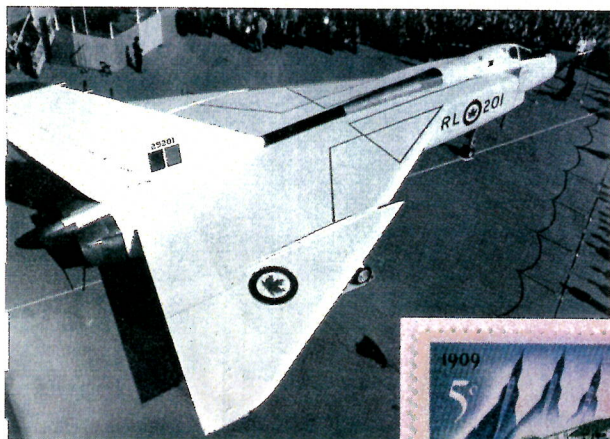




Arrow in 1957; and in stamp commemorating first powered flight in Canada: beautiful epitaph



'Our beloved Arrow'

On Feb. 23, 1959, Canada Post issued a commemorative stamp on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first powered flight in Canada, that of J. A. D. McCurdy aboard the Silver Dart. Just three days before, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker had announced to a hushed House of Commons that the Arrow contract was being terminated immediately ("Raising the Arrow," Cover, Jan. 13). Everyone recognized that the blue trio of delta-wing jet aircraft thrusting skyward, silhouetted behind the Silver Dart on the stamp, could only be our beloved Arrow. The Arrow died that week and the post office gave it a beautiful philatelic epitaph.

Bruce Connon,
Toronto

That the cost of the Arrow spiralled out of control is a matter of record: to \$9 million per aircraft from \$1.5 million within a period of five years. As for the F-101 McDonnell Voodoo fighters (which the Royal Canadian Air Force acquired in 1961) being "barely capable of breaking the sound barrier," that plane already held the world speed record of 1.83 times the speed of sound. And it is not very

likely that the CIA was nervous about the prospect of a foreign aircraft outperforming its top secret U2 spy plane. This high-altitude, subsonic reconnaissance aircraft bore no relation whatever to a supersonic fighter. I never heard my National Research Council colleagues predict that the Arrow would not achieve supersonic speed, as recalled by former Avro engineer James Floyd. But in any event, it was not the performance of the aircraft that is significant; the Arrow was doomed for other reasons. The unrealistic notion of an independent role for the RCAF

in the defence of North America yielded a specification for a complex and expensive weapon system for a national market too small to support the necessary research and development. The success of Canada's aeronautical design—from Pratt and Whitney engines, de Havilland Beavers and Dashes, and Canadair jets—can be seen in the skies of many countries; there is no need to invoke the Arrow episode to prove it.

Julius Lukasiwicz,
Professor, mechanical and aerospace engineering,
Carleton University,
Ottawa

I greatly enjoyed your coverage of the making of *The Arrow* and the profile that was done on me ("Easy rider"). Everything was faultlessly accurate, except for one thing. You wrote that, although I don't own the House of Blues chain, I serve as a "mouthpiece." In fact, as a founding investor/shareholder and one of the seven directors on the board, I feel it's important to let our prospective Canadian partners know that I put my money where my mouth is.

Dan Aykroyd,
Los Angeles

It wasn't until I read *Apollo: The Race to the Moon* by Charles Murray and Catherine Cox, a history of the engineers who worked on the American moon-landing mission, that I realized that the story of the Arrow is one of the world's great what-ifs. The authors quote a source who thought that the flood of suddenly unemployed world-class aerospace engineers from Canada was essential in meeting U.S. president John F. Kennedy's commitment to landing humans on the Moon. What if the Canadians hadn't gone to the States?

The cost of care

The current crisis in our medical system ("Radical surgery," Cover, Dec. 2) is simple to figure out. The culprit is plain old overuse. It's just too easy to access the system. Add inefficiency to this and you have a tired-out system. Everyone should be prepared (it's coming) to pay deductibles out of pocket—\$250 for a single participant and \$500 for a family, yearly. This one single item would and will discourage using the health-care system for frivolous problems. For the next \$5,000 of in-hospital expenses, 20 per cent of that should be paid by the user, out of pocket. For those who cannot afford to pay, the government will then step in and cover these expenses by a means test of those whose incomes are on the low end of the spectrum. If we want to save the system and keep it fairly intact, we must solve the problem of overuse for minor things.

Jack Haueter,
Richmond, B.C.

What if the Russians had landed on the Moon first and established a permanent presence? Would the space race have continued and would space today be a battleground? The Avro did not just alter history; its demise was pivotal in what many would consider the pivotal event of this century.

Jay Kirkland,
Edmonton

Rumor has it that one Arrow got away and that it was successfully kept out of the hands of "Dief the thief." If so, whoever perpetrated such a dastardly act must be exonerated—venerated even—and persuaded to bring this national icon back into the light. There must be an understanding, however, that it can be quickly hidden again should the Conservatives threaten to regain power.

Peter Dobbing,
Nepean, Ont.

You say that it was "debatable" whether Canada could "nurture its own aerospace industry." Well, we did. What the hell do you think they build at Canadair, yo-yos?

Jack MacLeod,
Halifax

Military coverage

"More dirty laundry" (Canada, Jan. 13) contains a misleading statement attributed to me that must be clarified. I have always advocated that realistic and appropriate standards (including phys-

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