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Minding Your Business

Ottawa—Whatever else it may do for our life and times, the broken Arrow has considerably upgraded a Canadian prophet at home. Possibly new honor should follow. Nearly three years ago, General Guy Simonds, retired Chief of Staff, predicted that the Arrow interceptor would "have a very short, if any, useful operational life".

General Simonds had other critical things to say of defense planning at that time, among them that: "Little dodging expediences grow into vast incubuses and huge sums of money are committed on a 'defense policy' that has never been thought through in all ramifications and consequences, and is no more than a ramshackle expensive patchwork."

The Conservatives, in Opposition at the time, were delighted to quote such observations by a man who should know as much as any about the operations of the Defense Department. They thought there should be a full-scale Parliamentary inquiry to hear General Simonds and others testify on defense policy and practice. Predictably, the Government would have none of that and Defense Minister Ralph Campney, since involuntarily retired, airily dismissed General Simonds' views.

Now the Conservatives are in power and George Pearkes is Defense Minister. The new Government has had 20 months to reassess the national defense effort and set a new policy. It has had access to all the secret information which must have shown conclusively a long time ago that the Avro Arrow is not swift and sure enough for modern quarry, and in all probability shows a lot of other unsatisfactory things about air defense planning.

It was in 1956, also, that General Earle Partridge, the American who now commands NORAD, doubted the effectiveness both of the Northern radar lines and of fighter aircraft capable of 1,600 mph, which is supposed to be about what the Arrow would do. If such comment was published at that time, how much more definite must have been the classified intelligence—then, and since Sputnik I?

But in all the past 20 months, there has been no sign the Government has been prepared for a reorganization of national defense. Mr. Pearkes enthusiastically took up the NORAD idea he inherited from the previous Government—and announced it as an operational entity before the details of a

formal agreement had been worked out in negotiation with the United States. The Arrow program went on for months while the Government knew it was useless, but no way was found to prevent the disintegration of the technical skills and productive capacity assembled at Malton.

Finally, having been inescapably confronted with the necessity for integration of defense production, the Government produced Monday's statement of the much-touted "agreement" for the sharing of the economic benefits as well as the burdens of North American defense production. Minister O'Hurley's policy and the Government's triumph in co-operation with the U.S. seemed to amount to telling Canadian industries to go get some contracts. Certainly the U.S. has promised Canada nothing but some more committee meetings and a couple of small contracts for radar equipment and Bomarc wings and ailerons.

Monday's emergency debate in the House was concerned only with the immediate situation at Malton, and the emphasis was on the unemployment problem caused by the Avro shutdown. But this is only one aspect of the defense problem.

There is no use holding a general debate until Mr. Pearkes gets around to producing his promised White Paper. But then the Government will have many questions to answer. The defense establishment as a whole (including production facilities) can no longer be planned in terms of national self-sufficiency. The cost of modern weapons and equipment makes this concept impossible. But at present the alternative idea of integration seems to involve less policy than drifting—into a passive orbit around the U.S.

Before the defense debate, there will be the External Affairs debate on Thursday, and Minister Smith owes the House some detailed information on Canadian-U.S. relations—particularly regarding the safeguards for national sovereignty that must be built into the growing structure of co-ordination and interdependence.

Last fall in New York, Prime Minister Diefenbaker spoke prettily of the flowers now being carefully tended in the garden of Canadian-U.S. relations (as compared with the weeds which he said used to sprout when the Liberals were doing the hoeing). There seems to be a growing question about that garden. Who gets to pick the flowers?

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