

Killing Arrow project right thing to do: expert

By Jason Warick
of The StarPhoenix

Contrary to popular myth, conspiracy theories, and a recent CBC miniseries, the Avro Arrow was not the glorious Canadian military accomplishment many have made it out to be, says the curator of a new exhibition on the controversial aircraft.

An exhibition on the Avro Arrow now on display at the Diefenbaker Centre dispels some of the myths surrounding the supersonic interceptor project which was scrapped by Ottawa.

The curator of the display, Russell Isinger, said he was "appalled" by the recent CBC miniseries on the Arrow's rise and fall.

"A lot of the information was wrong. They idolized and demonized who they wanted. We wanted to debunk the myths," said Isinger, who did his master's thesis on the Arrow.

"It was sad. It was a great story without tinkering with it. I guess they didn't want to let the facts get in the way of a good story."

The miniseries vilified then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, but Isinger said his predecessor, Louis St. Laurent, should shoulder more of the blame.

He said Diefenbaker did the right thing when he cancelled the now mythical Arrow project in 1959. It was skyrocketing costs and a changing military landscape that led to the Arrow's cancellation, not some sinister American plot, he argues.

Isinger's plain but intriguing collection in the main room of the Diefenbaker Centre tells the Arrow's story through photos, news clippings, and secret documents.

There is also a five-part summary to walk you through the material, and a



The Avro Arrow exhibition is on display at the Diefenbaker Centre until the end of the month

20-minute video.

A.V. Roe Canada Ltd. was commissioned in 1953 to build a plane to com-

bat the threat of Soviet bombers invading by way of the North Pole.

It began as a modest project, but St.

Laurent ordered what the display calls the "fatal expansion" in 1955.

The project was "the most expen-

sive Canadian defence project ever undertaken," which directly and indirectly employed a staggering 41,000 people.

Testing of prototypes proved the Arrow was a highly capable fighter plane, but St. Laurent failed to deal with the ballooning costs of production.

Originally budgeted for about \$2 million each, the Arrow was eventually projected to cost more than \$12 million each.

Canada was also having trouble marketing the Arrow to its allies, who believed the threat of Soviet bombers was becoming less of a threat.

The first Arrow prototype was unveiled on the very same day in 1957 the Soviets launched Sputnik, the first satellite.

Canada and its allies were suddenly more worried about the threat of missiles than strategic bombers.

The Diefenbaker government put off its decision to scrap the Arrow project several times because it would put so many people out of work.

Diefenbaker finally announced cancellation of the Arrow in February 1959.

"We're not an apologist for the Diefenbaker government. He took too long to cancel it, but Diefenbaker was right (to scrap the project)," Isinger said.

While Isinger railed against the television miniseries, he said it should give the display a lot of free publicity.

The Arrow display, which runs until the end of the month, should help attract new visitors to the Diefenbaker Centre, said weekend manager Dianne Schnell.

Isinger said people who come to the centre will get "an accurate portrayal of both sides of the story."

—SP Photo by Gord Waldner

STC plans to slash 55 jobs in next 12 months

By Bruce Johnstone
L-P Financial Editor

REGINA — Faced with mounting

not release its 1996 results for another couple of months. But Glendinning said last month the provincial bus company lost about \$6 million in 1996

"We're disappointed with our (1996) results in terms of our costs. This year

ees got their notice last week. Unlike SaskTel, which is offering early retirement packages to as many as 500 employees, STC is not offering incen-