

Around Our Neck

At a cost of \$6 million, and at a time when its own leading aircraft plant is virtually shut down, Canada is purchasing 10 amphibious Albatross planes from the United States. They will be used by the Royal Canadian Air Force for search and rescue work.

The Albatross is made by the Grumman Aircraft Company in Long Island. Its two engines give it a cruising speed of 225 miles per hour, and it has a range of 3,000 miles. It is one of the "workhorses" of the air.

The Canadian Government had hoped it could arrange to have these 10 planes made at the Avro plant in Malton, under license from the U.S. manufacturer. It sent an RCAF team down to Long Island last fall to see if this was possible. But the team got nowhere; the planes will be made in the U.S.

Many Canadians will compare this development with the announcement, last month,

that the West German aircraft industry (employing roughly as many people as Avro used to employ at Malton) is to build 200 Lockheed F-104 Starfighters under license from the U.S. manufacturer. These planes, to be used by German and Allied forces, will cost some \$400 million.

The comparison, or contrast, is not wholly fair. Obviously, it is more practicable for an aircraft plant to "tool up" on a 200-plane contract worth \$400 million than on a 10-plane contract worth \$6 million. Obviously, mass-production is more economic than individual production.

On the other hand, it may be pointed out that a small, inexpensive plane like the Albatross (or the Otter or the Caribou), lends itself readily to one-at-a-time production. We might also ask why, if Avro had been allowed to produce 10 Albatross planes for the RCAF, it could not have produced an additional, perhaps much larger, number for the U.S.—thus freeing the Grumman plant to go into something else, and making Avro's own production that much more economic.

It is this kind of defense production sharing that Canada must insist upon having. Nothing more may be involved in the Albatross purchase than a principle—but it is a principle very much to the forefront in Canada today. We have the plant, we have the skills, to produce weapons—whatever they may be—for the joint defense of Canada and the United States. All we need is the contracts; and they will have to come either from the Canadian Government or through the Canadian Government's representations to Washington.

Those representations will have to be strong ones, very strong indeed. The whole history of the last 10 years tells us that much. And the refusal of the U.S. to let us make 10 seaplanes—with our own money, for our own Air Force—tells us a little bit more. We have an albatross, in more ways than one, around our neck.