

Editorial

WAKE UP! TIME TO EAT

Last summer we boarded a trans-Atlantic airliner at 1:30 a.m. It was the end of a long day and ahead stretched the cramped monotony of a 12-hour tourist flight. We just wanted to spend as much of the time as possible asleep, beginning after boarding the airplane. But this was not to be: at 1:30 in the morning, the airline was determined it was going to serve a meal . . . not just a snack, a meal. To get everybody served took over an hour, which meant the lights stayed on till nearly 3 a.m. This is by no means an unusual procedure, and in fact happens so often that it seems to be standard airline practice, a contention that is apparently born out by the following statement from a CAI paper by three CPA officials: "On a long flight, one way to keep passengers happy is to keep them busy. The average person is never happier than when he is busy feeding himself. Therefore, wine and dine them until they are so stuffed they fall asleep. As one steward put it . . . 'A passenger can't voice a complaint if his mouth is full, so keep feeding him.'" That may be so, but once they succeed in getting you to sleep, why do they insist on waking you up intermittently to see if you want anything more to eat?

THE MISSILE OBSESSION

The shadow cast by the Soviet successes with their Sputniks and ICBM's is having a depressing and, in our opinion largely unwarranted effect on the outlook of many in Canada's Aircraft Industry.

This pessimistic outlook, it appears, is based on the ridiculous assumption that missile advances and the advent of the satellites spell the end of all aircraft development. The root cause for this pessimism can be attributed to what the well-known and widely syndicated American columnists, the Alsop Brothers, describe as an "obsession with missiles".

Widespread and Blinding: This obsession, and it is present throughout Canada and the U.K. as well as the U.S., is blinding everybody to the fact that even when missiles of all types are developed to a full operational capability — which the vast majority of them still lack — "conventional" aircraft will still have a role to play that will be no less important than the one they fill today. The character of this role may be changed, but its importance will be little affected.

A vivid example of how the character of the mission of a military aircraft can change is to be found in the case of what has until now been known simply as a "fighter". Recently, beginning with the widespread introduction into operational service of aircraft equipped to carry out automatic interceptions, more and more the designation "fighter" is being abandoned in favor of "bomber destroyer", as being more descriptive of what the aircraft is intended to do.

Now a lineal descendant of the "fighter", the Avro Arrow, is being seriously promoted as having a capability extending from bomber destroying through to anti-ICBM operations. This does not imply anything so far fetched as ICBM interception by an aircraft. The anti-ICBM potential, as explained by Avro Vice President Engineering J. C. Floyd, would be fulfilled as a carrier for an anti-ICBM missile.

Mr. Floyd points out that an anti-ICBM missile launched at 60,000 feet by an aircraft flying at Mach 1.5, has a much greater chance of making a successful interception than one launched from a ground level standing start. He backs up his argument with the interesting observation that the anti-ICBM missile launched from 60,000 feet at Mach 1.5 requires only one-third as much thrust as the ground launched missile, to carry out the same task; e.g., carry a warhead of the same size and destructive power to the point necessary to intercept at an altitude of 200 miles an ICBM coming in at a speed of Mach 10.

Transport and Maritime: Even more to the immediate point, the pessimists overlook the growing importance of military, as well as civil air transport, and of maritime reconnaissance operations (against missile carrying submarines, a threat that is worrying our defence planners much more than the long range ICBM). This growing importance in both cases will in all likelihood be reflected in increased orders for aircraft.

Sober consideration of all the evidence indicates that pessimism at this time is ill-founded; that the long-range prospects for Canada's Aircraft Industry remain good.