

THE POEM

We Who Were There

by

William L. Turner, 1962

We Who Were There • helped put an Arrow in the air
An achievement • Canada won't see • again
Developed with skill • its flights gave us a thrill
Why it ended • is how • I'll begin.

We Who Were There • knew the Arrow would share
Top honours • throughout the world's • aviation
But it had one deficiency • that proved a big inefficiency
It had no controls • for its payload • munitions.

We Who Were There • could bring no talent to bear
To develop ASTRA • the Arrow's weapons • control
A Canadian government program • with no credible stratagem
"Can't build it • don't know how" • we were told.

We Who Were There • were often sent where
For months • we'd work • on national secrets
To world and Canadian Labs • where expert boffins had
Weapon systems • but they always • eluded us.

We Who Were There • knew the U.S. had a flair
For developing • weapon systems • black boxes
So we who were there • went there unprepared
To learn our requests • to use their boxes • obnoxious.

We Who Were There • were told the U.S. was scared
Of sensitive info • leaving Canada • for the Soviet
U.S. industries determined • CIA/F.B.I. were certain
Secret data • to Canada • can't be kept quiet.

We Who Were There • knew spies were at any affair
Where black box folks • were expected • to attend
These spies worked as a pair • so they could later compare
Info 'bout facts • to their chiefs • they could send.

We Who Were There • knew Soviet questioners would swear
They would never • compromise • Canadian integrity
But their compulsive interrogations • 'bout classified information
Caused us • remarkable • taciturnity.

We Who Were There • Mountie primed, that one of the pair
Would ask questions • about Canada's • "machinery"
The other speechless would retain • all answers gained
With photo cameras • tape recordings • and memory.

We Who Were There • were used to handling black stuff with care
We'd signed documents • to keep secrets • amongst us
But We Who Were There • couldn't challenge true affairs
The U.S. government • operations like "Keystone" • had against us.

To We Who Were There • our U.S. friends wouldn't share
A transfer • of their stealth systems • we wanted
Yet none of We Who Were There • that I'm aware
Would disclose secrets • no matter • how taunted.

We Who Were There • were aware of the Bear
The KGB • who were covertly • around us
Their surreptitious surveillance • to determine the conveyance
Of Arrow weapons • was furtive • atrocious.

We Who Were There • heard of folks without care
Who would disclose • a Canada • U.S. secret
Making We Who Were There • our government and AVRO despair
'Cause we had an airplane • with no payload • and no market.

We Who Were There • knew schedules allowed no time to prepare
A weapons system • we shouldn't make • but should buy
MX1179 gear existed • but with our requests for its use resisted
Our Arrow dream • looked like • "pie in the sky".

We Who Were There • at CARDE • maybe 15 or more
In a meeting re fire control • for the Arrow
All the known facts were explored • then we secretly swore
Knowing no payload • doubtful funding • no Arrow.

We Who Were There • knew a big chief somewhere
Would inform government • of the Arrow's predicament
Who it was - we weren't told • and the Mounties we polled
Would say nothing • but wait • for a statement

We Who Were There • soon heard our government declare
"It was timely • to cancel • the Arrow
Due to high cost overruns • and production tool sums
The country • couldn't afford • the Arrow."

We Who Were There • knew the government wouldn't dare
State the truth • for cancelling • the Arrow
To admit national security • was easily penetrated and untrustworthy
The public • would hold our inept government • responsible..

We Who Were There • knew government deceit was fanfare
Sieve-security and treason • the cancel reason • we know
And our government through the years • will always have fears
One day • truth re the Arrow • will show.

We Who Were There • thought cancellation processes unfair
Vindictive orders • to destroy all tooling • parts and documents
We had 7 Arrows flying grade • 30 more being made
Storage costs • to keep one of them • Where's the argument?

We Who Were There • know the Arrow was rare
A proud symbol • of Canadian • perfection
And though ignominious avarice • changed careers for all of us
Note that AVRO workers • were a credible • selection.

We Who Were There • are amused by experts who air
Bafflegab • 'bout why the Arrow's • termination
None to date have been factual • their sources are not factual
So fairey tales • 'bout the Arrow • spread our nation.

So We Who Were There • know the glory we share
The Arrow's brilliance • the pride of TO • our town
The memories we hold • and the tales passionately told
Of our Arrow • that'll never • lie down.