

# Editorial

## CANADA'S PLACE

The following remarks are from the British publication "Aviation Report" and are of interest because they give an outsider's viewpoint on a subject that is of prime interest to the aircraft industry in Canada—original aircraft design.

"The lurid story . . . of the Avro Canada project for a saucer configuration was, on the whole, an unhappy episode, coming as it did at a time when there is a certain amount of lobbying for the soft-peddalling of design sponsorship. It was unfortunate, because it was not the best way of showing how important it is for Canada to continue to build up its capacity for original thought. But a better approach, surely, would have been for industry to indicate by some suitable means the fact that the Americans at this time are sponsoring, with almost religious fervor, every conceivable type of approach to the different means of exerting air power. Millions are being pumped into *anything* that shows the smallest degree of promise and extraordinary measures are being taken in the case of different conceptions, as in the case, for instance, of the F-104 project. This being so, it is essential that Canadians should play their part by selecting a portion of the vast jig saw, and build up a complete picture within a broader canvas. It would be a fatal waste of money just to build aircraft. All the messages from Ottawa in recent times express the view of responsible Canadians that Canada must make itself master of a particular environment. This will not mean smaller budgets for design sponsorship until the way ahead with the East is a lot clearer than it is today."

## WHERE IS THE LINE OF DEFENCE?

Recently a retired RCAF Reserve officer, Wing Commander Richard Rohmer, DFC, took some hefty swings at Canada's air defences.

Because W/C Rohmer was until a few weeks ago commanding officer of 411 (County of York) Auxiliary Squadron, and previously commanding officer of 400 (City of Toronto) Auxiliary Squadron, his remarks bear close examination. His chief points of criticism were: that the air defences now consisted of nine (ten, actually) auxiliary fighter squadrons equipped with obsolete Vampires and Mustangs; that there were no modern jet fighters to back up the so-called radar screen; that Canada was sending all her Sabres out of the country, either with RCAF squadrons posted to Europe, or as a contribution to Mutual Aid.

**Accurate Facts:** Unfortunately, the Wing Commander presented facts and figures that were uncomfortably accurate. At the same time, we find ourselves in disagreement with W/C Rohmer in the conclusions he draws from these facts and figures. His conclusions were, in fact, that . . . "The time has gone when we can wait for promised production. We need these aircraft—any aircraft—in this country, in Canada, now. We cannot defend ourselves with promises."

In our opinion, sending RCAF squadrons overseas and supplying Sabres to Mutual Aid is looking to our own defences first. The truth of the matter is that the Sabre, fine fighting machine though it has proved to be, is not a particularly suitable weapon for Canadian air defences. What Canada needs is an all-weather defence against bombers. This the Sabre cannot provide. This the Sabre has not been asked to provide in Korea, where its primary mission has been to supply top cover for air-to-ground attacking aircraft by being an extremely capable MiG destroyer. In Europe it can, if necessary, fill a similar role.

While the Sabre is undoubtedly quite capable of destroying any bombers that come across the pole to Canada, it could do this only if the Russians were to time their bombers' arrival within Sabre range to daylight hours and reasonably clear skies. While such attacks across the pole are entirely feasible and may even be the first to come in the event of war, we think that the heavy and continuing blows would be directed against Europe. Russia must first win and consolidate Europe before she can hope to take North America.

**The USAF's Role:** Wing Commander Rohmer ignores, too, the part that the United States is playing in the provision of air defence for North America . . . the air defences of the continental United States begin in the North, not at the Canada/U.S. boundary.

When we have squadrons of CF-100's, then we will have reasonably strong air defences on the home front. Actually, there is nothing wrong with the weapons we are now building and their proposed disposition, except that we should have had them sooner. Why didn't we have them sooner? That's easy . . . because our leaders were about as weak on foresight in 1945 as Wing Commander Rohmer is strong on hindsight in 1953.