

**editorial**

# ***The changing emphasis in Canadian air power***

At the time of going to press the White Paper on defence had not been presented, but from scraps of information and official statements already to hand, it would appear that Defence Minister Paul Hellyer is about to do a much-needed hatchet job.

The Minister has already made some changes — most of them directed at a reduction of the militia — and these have evoked a very mixed response. This magazine has nothing but applause for his declared policy of devoting a greater proportion of the defence budget to actual hardware and a smaller proportion to manpower and administration. The trend has been the other way for long enough.

From statements by the Prime Minister and actions of the Minister of Defence we can only conclude that Canada is, as fast as is decently possible, getting out of the nuclear weapons business. This is good news. Canada's excursions into the nuclear weapons field have been militarily and politically disastrous for pretty well all parties concerned.

Recent excursions into fighter aircraft have been no less unfortunate. The proportions of the Avro Arrow catastrophe have been almost equalled by the CF-104 fiasco. It is reliably reported that, due to attrition and growing obsolescence, the latter will be of little value after 1966. This puts the useful squadron service life of the CF-104 at about three years. Confusion over the role of the 104, and of Canada, in Western defence have contributed to this short life.

Defence Minister Hellyer has a golden

opportunity to wipe the slate clean and start over. We think he will be inclined to favor the traditional Pearson and Liberal role of keeper of the peace and will have a sympathetic ear for the recent appeal of Air Marshal Dunlap, Chief of the Air Staff, for a large number of additional DHC Caribou and C-130 Hercules transports. These would enable Canada to provide a fast-moving military police force for United Nations use.

The rejection of nuclear weapons and a return to the conventional type of force, more useful in dealing with trouble spots or participating in "small wars", may lead to an increased use of aircraft by the Canadian Army for transport, liaison and artillery-spotting purposes.

The Aviation Branch of the Canadian Navy would have difficulty justifying its present posture as part of a policing or small-war force. Its well-developed anti-submarine-warfare capability is designed for a role in the big war we all hope will never come, and this particular role may well be redundant in a newly oriented Canadian force. Declaring the Navy Branch's redundancy, or diversion to a new role, would require real political courage, and this is not likely to happen.

In fact many people are saying that when the Defence White Paper has been presented and the dust has settled once again, no one will be able to notice the difference. No real decisions or changes will have been made. We hope they are wrong.

Peter Brannan.