

# Editorial

## SAFETY FOR MILLIONS

It was amusing to note that the AITA's recent press release concerning the remarkable safety record of Canadian scheduled carriers over the past few years, rated only comparatively insignificant squibs in most newspapers. Certainly no daily which we saw considered the story newsworthy enough for the heavy treatment usually accorded the crash of a Tiger Moth in Saudi Arabia. Still, what can you expect: no smoke, no flames, no blood and gore — the basic things in life about which, news editors would have us believe, the plain and (if the news editors are correct), simple folk wish to be informed. In any event, nothing can detract from the achievement, of the domestic services especially: 79 million passenger-miles for each passenger fatality. A record which is, we believe, unequalled by any other country in the world.

## THE SECRET OF SECURITY

The question of security has been much in the news of late. It seems that vital secrets (e.g. the "McGill Fence", the first aerial firing of a Canadian guided missile, the so-called Avro Canada "Saucer" project) are getting out and the military are getting the wind up.

We agree that there is some cause for alarm and soul searching on the part of those who print the news. We admit that at different times practically every form of news media has handled national security with shocking irresponsibility. Yet it seems to us there is good and valid cause for such actions on the part of the news media.

The trouble, in our opinion, can be traced directly to those who are in a position to control the release of news, or to withhold same. They, too, should do a little soul searching. Their own interpretation of "classified" information is so erratic that it is little wonder that newsmen simply go ahead and print any information they can put their hands on. They should draw a straight and definite line and then follow it.

Herewith a few examples:

It is common knowledge that aircraft facts and figures just aren't given out by Government contractors. Everybody asks such questions from time to time, but the usual reaction is that the contractor simply is not allowed to dispense such information. The military will tell the seeker of information the same thing. This is "classified" information in the purest sense of the word.

*Yet in mid-February of 1953, the Rt. Hon. C. D. Howe detailed the whole of the airframe and gas turbine programs at Avro Canada to Commons.*

A few months ago, an enterprising press service which had kept track of all the RCAF aircraft accidents throughout the year, asked the Air Force how many hours it had flown in 1953 up till that time, the object being to relate accidents to flying hours. As to be expected, the Air Force said such information was classified. It has always been our own experience that all information about flying hours is considered as classified.

*Yet at the recent AITA annual meeting, Defence Minister Brooke Claxton announced that in the last year, the RCAF flew a total of 705,707 hours.*

Numbers of aircraft delivered to an Air Force in a given period are natural gist for the security mill. Who can blame AFHQ for not giving out such information when it is such a direct indication of fighting strength?

*Yet at the AITA meeting mentioned above, Mr. Claxton announced that during the past year the Air Force had in operation some 1,600 aircraft. Earlier, RCAF officers at CEPE told members of the Canadian Industrial Preparedness Association (in the presence of newsmen) that the RCAF had taken delivery of 860 aircraft in the 13 month period ended September 30.*

Classified, ha! In our glossary it has taken on a new meaning, to wit—Classified Information: Something that somebody of rank wants to announce in public before it can appear in print.