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**C.D.  
HOWE**  
a biography

McCLELLAND AND STEWART

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that a demonstration nuclear-power station, known as the NPD, should be designed and constructed using the technology pioneered in the NRX reactor. Howe approved the recommendation on condition that the program provide for the participation of one or more of the Canadian power utilities. Ontario Hydro became a partner in the project and this was the beginning of its extensive commitment to nuclear power. Howe and Leslie Frost broke the sod for the NPD power station in 1956. By the time the station came into operation Howe had long since passed from the scene, but atomic energy was to be a lasting and far-sighted bequest to the nation. The Candu reactor, the successor to the NPD, proved to be one of the world's most successful and economic nuclear-power stations. The development of large uranium resources not only guaranteed that Canada would have sufficient uranium to meet its foreseeable domestic requirements, but also that it would have a substantial surplus which could be sold in export markets.<sup>12</sup>

While nuclear technology promised results, another branch of Canadian technology was giving trouble. Canada's aircraft business was apparently prospering. The contracts dispensed by the Department of Defence Production ensured that it would be even more prosperous, and as far as the public was concerned, the Canadian-designed and produced CF-100 fighters rolling off A. V. Roe's production line at Malton were a signal of Canada's industrial prowess. Only a few officials had a different impression. Aviation technology was costly, Howe learned, as well as slow and quirky. The headaches connected with the production of the CF-100 even caused Howe to dispatch one of his Defence Production officials, Crawford Gordon, to Malton to see if he could straighten out the mess. He could not; instead of a solution, the heavy-drinking Gordon became in Howe's eyes part of the problem.<sup>13</sup>

The problem would soon get worse. Production of the CF-100 was past worrying about: its principal costs were already spent. But the next generation of fighter aircraft posed another, more expensive problem. The airforce wanted a supersonic jet interceptor; A. V. Roe obliged with a design. The new plane would be called the CF-105 - the Arrow.

Howe could not bear to contemplate another five years of A. V. Roe, Crawford Gordon, and trouble. "I must say," he wrote to Defence Minister Claxton on December 19, 1952, "I am frightened for the first time in my defence production experience." He had no confidence in the A. V. Roe Company,



either in its management or in its ability to stay within agreed costs. If the airforce had to have a new supersonic fighter, let the government contract the work "to a British firm which has the personnel, equipment and experience that qualifies them to do work of this kind." It went without saying that such work would be performed "for a fraction of the cost" of A. V. Roe's product.<sup>14</sup>

But Claxton did not agree. Placing a higher (as it turned out, much higher) value on Canadian technology than did Howe, Claxton launched the Arrow development program. Howe, who had once promised to deliver gold-plated pianos if the military wanted them, could only gnash his teeth as he presented periodic, embarrassed reports to the House of Commons. Howe's attitude toward the CF-105 was anything but lighthearted. "I can now say," he told the House of Commons in June 1955, "that we have started on a program of development that gives me the shudders." As the cost of the CF-105 climbed from \$1.5 or \$2 million per aircraft to a possible \$8 million, Howe's shudders increased. Attempts to sell the CF-105 to the Americans and British were unavailing; both Canada's allies expressed interest, admiration - and polite regret. But it was not until the spring of 1957 that the cabinet's Defence Committee bowed to the obvious: the Arrow would be cancelled - after the next election.<sup>15</sup>

But problems could normally be mastered by analysis, followed by firm decisions. If something had to be put off for the morrow, it would nonetheless ultimately be solved: there were limitless possibilities, unlimited opportunities and, as the phrase went, an ever-expanding economy. What was impossible today (too soon, too expensive) would not be so tomorrow. It might require a little direction from the top, but Howe was in a good position to provide that direction, prodding businessmen here, advising them there, handing out incentives where they were most needed. The trend was most definitely up.

Howe did not produce his economic auguries by himself. He relied, as always, on an expert staff to advise him, and to handle routine matters that might distract his attention to unimportant things. Mackintosh, his reconstruction adviser, went back to Queen's University in 1946, and was replaced by Sandy Skelton, his brilliant protégé. Skelton became assistant deputy minister of trade and commerce, and died tragically in an accident at sea. It was a sad loss. Skelton, many of his friends agreed, showed a better mind drunk than most of the dismal profession did sober.

and movers of the Canadian business world. V. W. Scully, for example, who ran Victory Aircraft for Howe during the war, had gone to the Steel Company of Canada on his boss' recommendation and had just been made chief executive officer; Douglas Ambridge, who had built Polymer for Howe and then worked on wartime merchant shipping, was now head of the giant Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company; Max Mackenzie, Howe's former deputy at Trade and Commerce, was with Chemcell in Montreal; Mitchell Sharp worked for Henry Borden, chairman of Brazilian Traction; T. N. Beaupré was soon to be president of Domtar, and Bill Bennett of Iron Ore of Canada; there was Eric Phillips and Eddie Taylor of Argus Corporation; and the list was still expanding.

Howe even saw some of his business friends on Sundays. Alice had managed to get him out to church regularly for the first time in their married life. An Episcopalian by conviction, she had joined the Church of England in Canada, and belonged to a high church parish in Ottawa; she was now a pillar of the cathedral parish of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal. Clarence, hitherto unconfirmed, late in 1957 had knelt to receive the Holy Ghost at the hands of the Lord Bishop of Ottawa - pleasing Alice was now well worth a mass - but he was reluctant to venture further. When he saw some of his old friends in the cathedral, however, he changed his Sunday habits. "This is my kind of church," he remarked enthusiastically.<sup>20</sup>

Howe lunched regularly at the Mount Royal Club, when not dashing off by TCA to a board meeting in Toronto or Vancouver. He enjoyed listening to the mounting chorus of muttering and grumbling against the follies and outrages of Prime Minister Diefenbaker, particularly from those who had raised money for the Conservative party in the 1958 elections. "Well," Howe commented loudly and cheerfully, "I didn't vote for him."<sup>21</sup>

But when the Prime Minister got himself into political trouble in February 1959 by cancelling the expensive Avro Arrow program and throwing thousands of highly skilled Canadians out of work, Howe refused to join the critical chorus. He said Diefenbaker had done the right thing: there were limits to government spending and there would be no international market for the plane, however magnificent it was. A couple of months earlier, Howe had the satisfaction of hearing that his greatest single project was complete. In a blinding sleet storm