

Some Repairs Are Needed

Prime Minister Diefenbaker had the opportunity, when he addressed the House of Commons Monday night, to mitigate and moderate the bitter controversy which followed his Government's decision, last Friday, to terminate the Arrow aircraft and Iroquois engine program. To some measure, he used that opportunity; in his promise to the future, his speech was constructive. But mostly, he chose to follow the opposite course.

Stung by the criticism which followed last Friday's announcement—criticism he should have expected, and for which he should have been prepared—the Prime Minister engaged, at several points, in recriminations which were neither becoming to him nor justified by the facts. Particularly regrettable was his suggestion that, in ordering last Friday's mass lay-off at Malton, the management of Avro Aircraft was deliberately attempting to embarrass his Government. That was not the case; and had Mr. Diefenbaker been properly informed of the various events that preceded and followed his announcement in the Commons last Friday, he would have known it was not the case.

This newspaper has not taken sides as between the Government and Avro; nor has it the slightest desire to do so. We have accepted, without quibbling or quarrelling, the Government's decision to terminate the Arrow and Iroquois program. What concerns us is the method of that termination, and the threatened waste of a great asset. Satisfied that the opinions we expressed editorially, last Saturday and Monday were fully in accordance with the facts, we remain convinced that the method of winding up the Arrow-Iroquois program was wrong, and that the resulting trouble and turmoil were largely unnecessary.

Events of the last four days have in some measure helped to put things aright. Undoubtedly, the intervention of Premier Frost, and the discussions he has had with officials of the company and union, have had a calming and—what is most needed now—a constructive effect. We are certain—his critics in the Legislature notwithstanding—that if Mr. Frost can carry forward these discussions in the spirit which marked their beginning, and supplement them with those which got under way at Ottawa yesterday, a salvage operation will be possible.

And that—the rescue and retention of the establishment that produced the Arrow—is all we care about. This newspaper is not trying to set itself up as an expert on

defense and defense requirements. It simply believes that the asset—in people and plant—which this industry represents, goes far beyond the importance or otherwise of any particular weapon. It cost a great deal of money to create this asset—whose value to Canada over the next decade or so could be many times greater than the cost of the whole Arrow program. This asset, this industrial complex, is what we must save; and it can only be done if all those in a position to help and co-operate believe, as sincerely as we do, that it is worth saving.

The Prime Minister held out the promise of such co-operation in his Monday night speech. He said his Government would give "the fullest and most sympathetic consideration . . . to any practical suggestion to keep the facilities of Avro Aircraft intact". All Canadians must hope his Government will do more, and assume some of the initiative to achieve this. If the Canadian Government is to co-operate wholeheartedly with Premier Frost's committee, then some repairs will have to be made at Ottawa. We may assume, on the basis of the Prime Minister's promise, that these repairs are going to be made. We may assume that he will entrust the job of salvaging the Arrow complex to people he is certain have the knowledge, the competence, and, not least, the enthusiasm.

Globe & Mail.