Editorial

TEST OF SKILL

Is aerobatics a lost art in Canada? For that matter, was it ever an art in this country? A Canadian civilian pilot with aerobatic ability is a rare creature unless, of course, he has had military training. In fact, it seems that about the only test of flying skill for amateur pilots that is encountered any more in this country is the spot landing contest. Yet this lack of interest in aerobatic flying is apparently characteristic only of Canada, and not at all typical of the rest of the flying world. For example, the U.S. regularly has national aerobatic championships, and internationally there is the World Aerobatic Championship, the second of which is being held this month at Budapest, Hungary. Among the competitors are teams from the U.S., East Germany, West Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia. Canada is notable for its absence. Canadians have a great and growing enthusiasm for sport aviation — including gliding, parachuting, and private flying in all its conventional phases. Why there should be such an apparent lack of interest in the area of aerobatics is a mystery. It's a mystery we'd like to see solved.

NOT TO THE SWIFT

Was there ever a more fantastic story than the rise and fall of Avro Aircraft? Even Hollywood, in its wildest moments of improbability, would find the plot a bit too far-fetched. Can you imagine a writer trying to sell this outline to a producer? — A company starts virtually from scratch in December 1945, rises to heights of technical achievement, production, and income within less than a decade. Its fame is international. It is in the forefront of aircraft design and development. Its engineers and scientists are ranked with the best anywhere; they are invited frequently to address learned societies; they receive many awards for technical excellence. The administrative architects of this burgeoning empire, which has become one of Canada's largest single employers, are regarded as business whizz kids.

In one period between 1953 and 1959, the company is awarded government contracts worth more than $300 million.

Yet this same company, after a lingering illness complicated by malnutrition, fails to live out the second decade of its history. Its bright scientists . . . gone. Its ingenious engineers . . . gone. Its whizz kid management . . . gone. Its multi-million dollar contracts . . . gone.

Full Circle: The news early this month that The de Havilland Aircraft of Canada Ltd. was taking over the Malton facilities of Avro Aircraft brought to an end — just sixteen years and seven months after it started — the meteoric career of the Malton-based company.

The principal reason for Avro Aircraft's untimely demise was, of course, the cancellation three years ago of the Avro Arrow. This traumatic experience was one from which the company never recovered in even a small way. Undeniably the problems faced by the management were staggering, but even making allowance for this, the company's performance in the last three years has been disappointing. Post-mortem reveals that the feeling is very widespread that the Avro name is still anathema in Ottawa, and to a very large extent this was behind Avro Aircraft's failure to re-establish itself in the smallest way. The change of name of the parent company from A. V. Roe Canada Ltd. to Hawker Siddeley Canada Ltd. tends to suggest that not only the outsiders felt this was the case.

Nothing but Good: The take-over of the Avro facilities bodes nothing but good for the giant Malton complex, which has about half as much plant space again as de Havilland Canada operates at Downsview. This means that de Havilland Canada will now have expanded plant space in the order of 2.5 million square feet, about 30% less than Canadair, but nevertheless still impressive by any standards. More important, perhaps, than the Avro plant itself, is the variety of very modern manufacturing and production tooling which it contains. Giant stamping presses, skin mills, etc., many bought specially to handle the advanced fabricating techniques required for the Arrow, are now at de Havilland Canada's disposal.

The future never looked brighter for de Havilland Canada. With its greatly expanded facilities, an important development contract from the U.S. Army for the turboprop Caribou II (won, incidentally, against the competition of *24* American companies), and the first civil sale of the piston-powered Caribou I sewed up, the company can take quiet pride in its progress. Few aircraft companies are built on a bed-rock foundation, but de Havilland Canada is one of those that is.