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FEB 21/59

Hopes Supersonic Tests e Carried Out With Arrows

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Editorial

The Beginning—and the End

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This newspaper deeply regrets, as all Canadians must, their Government's decision to make an immediate end of the Avro Arrow and Iroquois engine development program. We regret that, in announcing the decision, Prime Minister Diefenbaker qualified what presumably was expert opinion on the future of manned interceptors such as the Arrow with a reference to "the huge sums which it is our duty to ask Parliament to provide for defense". This can be taken to mean the decision would not have been made but for Budgetary reasons. We regret the decision even more in view of the glowing (and richly deserved) tribute the Prime Minister paid to Avro's achievement in the development of this plane and its power plants.

We are in no position to judge the exact merits or life of the Arrow; on that subject, there is a welter of conflicting opinions. But this Canadian-developed airplane is not the important thing—it might as well have been a Canadian-developed locomotive or automobile. The important thing, the only important thing, is the future of the engineering, technical and research establishment that brought the Arrow into being.

That establishment was built up with great effort, at heavy expense, and over a long period of time. Outside of the troops we have stationed in Canada and in Western Europe (whose cost must be written off, like insurance premiums, as protection against something we hope will not happen), the engineering team that developed the Arrow is the only thing we can show for the \$15 billion which, over the last decade, Canada's taxpayers have paid out in the name of defense.

The public should recognize the peculiar nature of this establishment. It is very young, as industrial enterprises go, but its achievements—"outstanding achievements", said the Prime Minister—in a span of less than 10 years are a measure of its importance and significance to Canada. Its misfortune, perhaps, is that it was created to serve one customer—the Department of National Defense—although ultimately it would have grown, developed and diversified to serve Canadian industry everywhere.

Peculiar, too, was the establishment's function, which was not to manufacture products in the hope of peddling them to this and other Governments, but to design and manufacture defensive weapons to this Government's own specifications. Avro could, in its early and present stages, produce only as—and only what—Ottawa told it to produce. Hence the gravity of the situation in which it now finds itself.

The Prime Minister's judgment on the Arrow and its future must as we have said, be accepted. The fact remains, however, that the Government has no program or policy by which to put anything in its place. It is on this fact, we believe, that the Government's decision—and the consequences thereof—must ultimately be judged. True enough, the present Government inherited the Arrow program from its predecessor; from its predecessors, too, it inherited the Defense Department and the Defense Production Department which originated the program. But this takes no responsibility off the present Government's shoulders; the decision it announced yesterday was its own.

It would seem, in some measure at least, a financial, a Budgetary decision. But the economy represented by the scrapping of the Arrow has its obverse side. Buying weapons elsewhere—which has now, apparently, become Canada's policy—may seem a little cheaper. Or again, it may not; we may now have to take weapons from the United States at a stated price—with the United States doing the stating.

In either case, however, these weapons will be bought with dollars taken out of the Canadian tax pot and sent across the line; whereas when we produced our own weapons, the money went for the employment of our own people, our own taxpayers, and for the use of our own resources. In fact, a large part of that money was recovered almost immediately by tax officials of the Federal Government; and if not of the Federal Government, then of the Provinces and municipalities. Maybe that meant a slightly higher price tag on the weapons concerned—but it was better economics than buying abroad.

We agree, once again, that the Government's decision on the Arrow must be accepted. But, given that decision, the national interest still required that the great and important industrial establishment which developed the Arrow be maintained. And there was a way in which—if not making this particular weapon—the establishment could be maintained. It could be maintained, as this newspaper said repeatedly over the years and especially in recent months, by a genuine, equitable sharing of defense production between Canada and the United States. Yet since Sept. 22 of last year, when Mr. Diefenbaker revealed that the industry's future was in jeopardy, his Government has not managed to persuade our partner, so-called, of the importance—indeed, the necessity—of such sharing.

The Prime Minister now tells us there is nothing to put in the place of the Arrow. We will share only in the development of the Bomarc program, and the nature of that sharing is disagreeably clear. We Canadians will be allowed to dig the hole; the Americans will put up the building. That simply is not good enough.

And here is the irony of it. Most Canadians will recall that in the early postwar years we were not permitted to share defense production with the United States; the reason the United States gave being that we lacked the necessary "know-how". So, at great trouble and cost, we acquired the "know-how." Still, there was no sharing. And now, what? Now, the brilliant array of engineering and technical talent which built up this great Canadian industry will be dissipated. Now, these highly-trained men and women—the one national asset—will probably go. Where? To the United States.