

# Arrow 'Kill' Correct But Badly Fumbled

Prime Minister Diefenbaker's decision to scrap the Arrow, though painful for the Toronto area, is basically sound. It required some political courage. But both the government and the A. V. Roe company must be sharply censured for their handling of this important matter. The sad result of their errors and omissions was proclaimed in last night's headlines: the mass dismissal of nearly 14,000 Avro employees.

Surely, planning and preparation could have softened or deflected this cruel blow. Apparently the government and the company did neither; certainly they did not co-operate to provide for the future of the industry or its people.

It is 20 months since the chiefs of staff recommended that the Arrow be dropped; six months since the government made up its mind to do so. Indeed there was time to plan the orderly and gradual liquidation of the Arrow program; to look into the possibilities of converting the plant to other uses, military or peaceful; or, failing that, to help the employees find other work suited to their valuable skills.

There was time, but it was not constructively used.

The government was at fault, too, in

leaving a little room for uncertainty in its original announcement on the Arrow program last September. As reasons for not going ahead with production of the Arrow aircraft and Iroquois engine, Mr. Diefenbaker cited their "very high cost" in relation to their military value, and said the advent of missiles had reduced the expected need for manned interceptors. However, he said development of the Arrow would be continued until March, when the question would be reviewed again "in the light of all the existing circumstances."

Most observers, including The Star, read this announcement as a death notice for the Arrow. But the managers of Avro, instead of preparing for the Arrow's demise, seized on the small element of doubt and launched a high-powered publicity and promotion campaign in an effort to change the government's mind. This was not only a tactic of doubtful propriety for a company living on taxpayers' money. It was also a mistake, as the event has shown—a mistake which made termination of employment for Avro workers more harsh and abrupt than necessary.

Had the government stated its in-

tention clearly last fall, and ordered the Arrow program tapered off to a definite terminal date, the employees would have known precisely where they stood and would have had time to seek other jobs. A more realistic attitude of the company would have had the same effect. Instead, nearly 14,000 persons are suddenly thrown out of work at the height of winter unemployment.

It is this disaster which startles and concerns people here, and because Avro lived on government contracts, the federal government has special responsibility to relieve it. But the effects of the Arrow decision will be felt far beyond this area, and may even shape the economic and political future of Canada. Some of these wider implications are discussed in two other editorials in these columns today.

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