

The Economic Echoes of Malton

Abandonment of the Arrow means much, much more than the end of a single plane model. Its impress will lie heavy on the entire Canadian economy, and—unless prompt and broad counter-measures are taken—on this nation's destiny.

The fact is that in the seven years that the Arrow has been in the works, a vast industrial complex has come into being, involving aircraft, engines and electronic equipment of the most advanced types. This industry has sent its roots through an estimated 650 plants, and at its heart lay a force of some 4,000 highly trained and almost irreplaceable scientists, engineers and technicians.

With the Arrow scrapped, this entire industry will be crippled, and its force of specialists is very likely to disperse to the winds, mostly blowing to the hungry labor market south of the border.

This is an economic setback that calls for the most energetic steps by the A. V. Roe company and the govern-

ment. The most obvious alternative to the Arrow, of course, would be a sizeable share of the U.S.-Canadian joint defence orders. The government has said that it is already seeking this in the current negotiations with Washington. Despite its seeming attractiveness, however, this is nothing that should be done until the worth of the new weapons to Canada is better known, and until Canadians have had a better look than they have been allowed up to now at the new U.S.-Canadian defence arrangement.

What is really needed now are commercial alternatives, to which thought should have been given a long time ago. Could not the A. V. Roe company, for instance, display the same drive and ingenuity in producing durable and consumer goods that the Ruhr concerns displayed after the war? And even better, could not the civil aircraft industry in Canada be greatly expanded? The De Havilland Aircraft of Canada, Ltd. has shown that such an enterprise could exist and prosper in

this country. The corps of brilliant engineers and skilled technicians needed for such an industry is already here. And if financial support is needed, the government—in the national interest—should supply it without stint.

The stakes are high. They include the fate of the trained men whose loss or even dispersal the country cannot afford. They also include Canada's economic destiny. If the skill and equipment that have been used up to now to produce aircraft and electronic equipment are left idle, Canada might just as well reconcile herself to becoming a second-class industrial power. With the nuclear age upon us, we might well become its version of hewers of wood and drawers of water. This is a bleak prospect for a young, growing and dynamic nation. It is a prospect that a government pledged to a vision of the future should not tolerate, if it expects the people to tolerate it.