

Arrow Decisions

The following is George R. Pearkes' interpretation of events as related in an interview conducted by Dr. Reginald Roy - April 5, 1967:

(ACC 74-1 Box 5, Interview #61)

"I took chances - we were defenceless against the high powered bomber - we had the old CF-100, it couldn't compete with the modern Russian bomber; we had no supersonic fighter, but the Americans emphasized the fact that they had lots of them. Now then, the question I had to face...was, if you scrapped the Arrow, you'd got nothing; what will you do? Will you buy American aircraft to fill in this gap - cheaper American aircraft...That's where people began to tear their hair and say 'you scrapped the Arrow, now you're turning round and buying cheaper (and they would say "not so good") aircraft - although I think the American aircraft was just as good as the Arrow would have been at any time - or say, 'here, you can rely on American aircraft, not having bought them, but putting your pride in your pocket' and saying 'here, we will give facilities for American fighter squadrons to come and be stationed in Canada so that they can get the advantage there, or if not actually stationed in there, when the situation deteriorates they can move forward and operate from Canadian airfields. And I had the assurance that the Americans at this time had lots of fighters...and I was talking to the Under Secretary of Defence...he said to me, 'If I was you, I wouldn't put all that money into that aircraft - if you don't want to buy aircraft from us, you may rest assured that we've got lots of them which we can use in the help of the defence of the North American Continent if a crisis comes. And that's what convinced me more than anything else..."

R: I must say I sympathize with the position you found yourself in with respect to the Arrow because...I can't help but think that at this time there must have been one devil of a lot of pressure on you to carry it on.

P: To carry on the Arrow? Oh, we were beseiged by A.V. Roe people - they were always knocking at the door. And mind you, a lot of the airforce people themselves wanted it. Oh yes, the airforce were bitterly...a lot of the airforce people, I don't say all...the airforce had senior officers working with A.V. Roe and had been there and their attitude was "get more money out of the government - let us have this - why don't you get more money out - are you trying hard enough - we like this, why this will be a wonderful Canadian fighter." I don't say all the airforce, but there was quite a large percentage.

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