

LETTERS

Defence aides ordered Arrow scrapped, author says

Re *Who ordered Canada's Avro Arrow destroyed?* (Feb. 2). In 1992, I answered the question of who ordered the blow-torching of the Arrow, when I reproduced then newly declassified government records in my book on the subject (*Storms Of Controversy: The Secret Avro Arrow Files Revealed*).

It was not then prime minister John Diefenbaker or A.V. Roe boss Crawford Gordon.

Shortly after the cancellation, the RCAF advised the National Aeronautical Establishment (NAE), an arm of the National Research Council (NRC), that five aircraft and 14 engines could be made available for supersonic research.

On March 11, 1959, the RCAF received a reply that the NAE was not interested. Had it said yes, we would have Arrows today.

On March 13, 1959, the chief

of air staff, Hugh Campbell, wrote to then defence minister George Pearkes and advised him of the NAE decision and added that, with the minister's approval, the RCAF would take steps to dispose of the Arrow and engines.

On March 19, 1959, Pearkes wrote back to Campbell concurring, but added that he wished to be informed of the method of disposal.

On March 26, 1959, Camp-

bell wrote to Pearkes recommending the Arrow and engines be reduced to scrap. Pearkes sent the letter to his deputy minister, asking for his advice and comments.

Why would he need his deputy minister's comments if he already had Dief's order in hand or if Gordon had already ordered the destruction?

On April 8, 1959, Pearkes concurred with Campbell's recommendation to scrap.

On May 15, 1959, a letter from J. L. Bush, Department of Defence Production, was sent to his counterpart, C. A. Hore at Avro, advising that everything be reduced to scrap because even some British interest had not materialized.

There is more, but I will end with the words of Pearkes, written on June 9, 1959, to a man in Brantford who had asked that one Arrow be spared for posterity:

"Although I sympathize with your desire to preserve the Arrow as an item of historical interest, I cannot grant your request for economic reasons.

"At the present time the completed aircraft are being stripped of equipment and will be scrapped in the near future. We will be able to salvage several hundred thousands of dollars."

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