

EDITORIAL

We Need a "Survival" Report for Canada

THERE is some evidence of a realization in Canada that air power is the great threat to the security of North America, that our aviation must be developed as the core of the new strategic concept of defense. There have been a few echoes on this side of the border of the resounding alarm sounded by "Survival in the Air Age," the report of President Truman's Air Policy Commission. Air Marshal Robert Leckie, retiring as RCAF Chief of Air Staff, said:

"... We can no longer look on the world with the old-fashioned projection of land masses... Moscow is only 4,650 miles from Edmonton, 4,685 miles from Winnipeg, and 4,425 miles from Montreal. Need I say more?" Dr. O. M. Solandt, chairman of the Canadian Defense Research Board, warned that:

"The advent of the atomic bomb and long-range bomber puts the greatest possible emphasis on the need for maintaining our forces in being in time of peace. **There may be no time to mobilize in a future war.**

But it is doubtful that many Canadians realize the awesome dimensions of the air-preparedness assignment. There is no Canadian counterpart to "Survival" or to the subsequent equally nerve-racking report of the U. S. Congressional Aviation Policy Board. As reported in the March issue of Canadian Aviation, the document, "Survival" urged increase of the current Air Force budget from \$2,850 millions to \$4,150 millions, with a further boost to \$5,450 millions in 1949. The Congressional Board set an objective of 35,000 warplanes by 1952 and advised the expenditure of nearly \$10,000 millions a year to make air power the decisive factor in maintaining the peace.

In lieu of a corresponding committee recommendation on Canadian air policy, let us apply these measurements here on the basis of relative population. The RCAF estimates for the 1948-49 fiscal year total \$80 millions. The "Survival" report, reduced to our scale, would advocate \$377 millions. Our procurement program for modern operational aircraft is almost insignificant. The Congressional Board program, if applied to the Canadian scale, would mean building up an operational strength between 3,000 and 4,000 aircraft in 1949-1952 inclusive.

The prospect of shouldering heavy financial burdens for defense is painful. Nevertheless, these sobering facts spell out a peril which it would be criminal folly to ignore.

The defense estimates will be up for debate soon after this appears. Let's not shrug off our democratic responsibility with the attitude that it's up to Ottawa. Write your representative. Make sure that he understands the role of the RCAF in the real-life, or death, drama of the air age.

IT IS the Government's duty to effect an air policy to cope with our perilous situation.

According to the findings of the "Survival" commission: **"A strong aircraft industry is an essential element in the nation's air power."**

The news that plans are proceeding to implement an industrial preparedness program for Canadian industry is an encouraging, if belated, sign that some attention may be given to the plight of our aircraft manufacturing industry. One of the first and most urgent tasks of an industrial mobilization board should be a plan to salvage the technical skill and the nucleus of "know-how" essential to a rapid expansion of the aircraft industry.

It is true that the large-capacity aircraft plants of Canadair Limited at Montreal and A. V. Roe Canada Ltd. at Toronto have received Government support and encouragement. The de Havilland Aircraft of Canada plant has managed to survive without Government help and, in fact, has produced two excellent original aircraft: the Chipmunk and the Beaver. But we question whether these fine efforts provide a sufficient nucleus for the almost-overnight expansion which might become a vital necessity. Let us remember that even in World War II there was serious talk of moving the British aircraft industry to Canada. **Can anyone today justify the malnutrition of our sadly shriveled aircraft industry?**

It was not expected, of course, that aircraft manufacturing would retain in peacetime more than a midget replica of its robust 1944-45 proportions. (At the peak it was the biggest industry in the country and was producing 4,000 planes a year.) But what has happened? With the three exceptions noted above, our plane plants have been allowed to waste away. We have seen skilled design teams dissolved, lost to the industry, for lack of even the dribble of orders necessary to keep a nucleus alive. The fate of Fairchild Aircraft Ltd., designers and producers of the excellent Husky is one example. Disappearance of Noorduy Aviation is another.

In England it has been taken for granted that the aircraft manufacturers would be kept going with military orders and with government financial support of design and development work for civil as well as military planes. Here, the Government has actually run some of our manufacturers out of business by saturating the market with war surplus aircraft at sacrifice prices. Early this year, War Assets Corporation revealed that aircraft, engine and component sales had reached the total of \$10 millions since the end of the war and there were still some 900 licenseable war surplus planes available.

We believe that the dangerous international situation calls for an immediate and thorough investigation of our defenses. A Canadian equivalent of the Truman Air Policy Commission should be assigned to prepare an impartial nonpolitical report to the nation on our survival in the air age.

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