

Editorial

STILL WAITING

Is it just our imagination, or has the new terminal building at Montreal's Dorval Airport really been under construction since the Year One? The exact dates elude us, but our recollection is that the project was originally announced by Lionel Chevrier, who was Minister of Transport at the time. It was not actually started for a couple of years after that, by which time George Marler was holding the Transport portfolio. In 1957, we published a picture (taken in June) of the just-completed steel-work. The last scheduled date we heard for the terminal's official opening was Sept. 1959. We can't help wondering if it will be ready by then, since this is the third revised completion date. We hope that all this is well worth waiting for. Air travellers in and out of Montreal have surely suffered long enough.

A NEED IGNORED

It will be, quite literally, a matter of years before it will be possible to view the cataclysmic events of last month in proper perspective. Not until the beginning of the time period in which the Arrow was scheduled to see operational service will it be possible to pass final judgment on the rightness or wrongness of John Diefenbaker's actions.

At the same time, it is quite safe to say now that Mr. Diefenbaker's decision was a political/economic one and bore absolutely no relation to continental air defence requirements as military authorities see them. Mr. Diefenbaker's attempts, on his own and with the help of his National Defence puppet, to justify the decision on military grounds just do not hold water. This deceitful display, which was apparently swallowed by the opposition members and by a large segment of the public, is well exposed by our Ottawa correspondent in the article beginning on page 38.

One-Man Band: The Prime Minister who, it is becoming quite clear, runs his Government as a one-man show, tried to build up a picture of this decision being arrived at only after lengthy and wide-ranging discussions with his "advisers".

Who are these advisers? The Chiefs of Staff were frequently mentioned in the debate on the Arrow. Unfortunately, it is not possible for them to speak out. If the Chiefs of Staff did actually recommend the cancellation of the Arrow, was the recommendation a unanimous one? Are we to be expected to believe that the Air Force member would concur when his immediate predecessor, speaking as second in command of NORAD, stated emphatically that "for as long as we can foresee, we must have manned interceptors..."

There is, within the Cabinet, a committee on defence. In the days of the previous government it met at regular intervals to consider matters of the moment in relation to defence policy; when there were questions of grave import to be answered, this committee met more frequently... sometimes every couple of weeks.

It should be made clear that at no time was the defence committee a decision-making body. Nevertheless, it did study the current defence problems and make recommendations or provide briefings to the Cabinet as a whole.

No Counsel: So far as we are able to ascertain, with the coming into power of the Conservative Government, this committee to all intents and purposes ceased to exist. At least, it has not been an effective operating committee in that time. It has apparently met only three times in the life of the Conservative Government and not at all since the Prime Minister's statement on defence policy of Sept. 23, 1958.

Is this not strange, in view of the crucial importance of a decision on the future of the Arrow?

The Prime Minister's references to mysterious advisers notwithstanding, by his own choice he has no advisers in defence matters other than the Minister of Finance. On this pair rests the entire responsibility for Canada's rapidly vanishing ability to provide her fair share of the continent's air defences.