

Premier Frost Lends a Hand

Premier Frost's prompt decision to convene a conference of business, labor and municipal leaders to discuss the future of Avro Aircraft Limited displays initiative and leadership of a high order. The Provincial Government has no legal or moral obligation to salvage the bits and pieces of this shattered industry, whose predicament was caused solely by Governments at Ottawa. But by assuming a moral obligation and accepting its challenge, Mr. Frost is demonstrating that he, at least, has properly evaluated the worth and importance of the Avro establishment.

The most urgent problem to face the conference will be how the skilled team of engineers and technicians which Avro has carefully put together can be kept intact. One of the possible outlets for their creative talent was mentioned by Mr. Frost when he said he would rather see the Province developing nuclear energy to light homes and run refrigerators than making atom bombs and missiles.

Avro has already undertaken considerable nuclear research, not only on the problem of a nuclear-powered aircraft engine, but also on the general application of such power to industrial uses. A team of five engineers from Orenda Engines has spent almost two years at Chalk River, on loan to Atomic Energy of Canada. Their contribution, particularly in the field of metallurgy, has been noteworthy.

The full potential of atomic energy has yet to be explored, but it is certain that this Province—and indeed much of the world—will become increasingly dependent on it. Ontario's first nuclear power plant, for example, will be in operation in 1961. Atomic power, in the opinion of the Ontario Hydro Chairman, Mr. James Duncan, has become an urgent necessity.

Avro might well be in the vanguard of these developments, if given the opportunity. Its contribution need not be limited to Canada alone; if this country, rich as it is in hydro, coal, gas and oil resources, has need for nuclear energy, how much greater is the need in the underdeveloped countries of the Commonwealth?

It may well be that the most practical way of getting nuclear knowledge and its practical applications from those who have it to those who need it will be through a Commonwealth Association established for the purpose. The Dominion Government might well divert some Colombo Plan aid to such companies as Avro to further the Association's aims, knowing that it would

benefit India and the other countries which need help in a most practical way.

This is only one way in which Avro's talent could be used. The proposed conference will explore other projects, particularly those involving its research and planning staff. Ontario has many needs, both public and private. In the latter field, much of the research and development for Canadian subsidiary industries is done at head offices in the United States. These industries might be persuaded to make use of the admirable facilities which Avro has available for the purpose.

The Orenda subsidiary of Avro is in a strong position. Its Iroquois engine is one of the most powerful in the Western World. Unlike the Arrow, for which it was designed, it can be adapted for other uses and the company should be well placed to capture a share of the ever-growing market for jet engines.

As Mr. Frost said, it is imperative that such an important establishment as Avro, with its great scientific, industrial and technological value, should continue to serve the Province and the country. There will be no easy solutions facing the conference called by the Premier, no precedents to chart its course.

But as they meet, the representatives should be guided by the statement of Defense Production Minister O'Hurley, when he visited the Orenda engine plant at Malton last June: "Training and maintaining a force of designers, engineers and production experts, such as you have at Orenda, is every bit as vital to the survival of the free world as is the building of our armed forces."

Globe and Mail