

Where Do We Go From The Arrow?

The decision to scrap the Arrow was inescapable. In design and performance it may well be as fine a military craft as any built anywhere. Yet, it was not expected to be operational until after mid-1962, and by that time it would have been hopelessly outmoded by the development of other weapons. It might have given the country a semblance of defence; in fact, this would have been a \$2 billion illusion. Production of a weapon cannot be justified by the employment it provides, or even by the skills it attracts and develops. It must be worth its price in terms of protection for the nation. There was scant prospect of the Arrow passing that test in the age of missiles.

As if to emphasize that the dropping of the Arrow was not a verdict against a particular plane but a part of a new broad policy, Mr. Diefenbaker coupled his announcement with a lengthy statement on defence.

In it, he revealed the government's hope of obtaining American nuclear warheads for the Bomarc missiles, and of being able to store such warheads on Canadian soil. He disclosed the imminent acquisition of the SAGE electronic control equipment, and the extension of the Pinetree Radar Control system. He, finally, hinted at negotiations with Washington on defence matters as yet undisclosed—and promised to inform the House, "within the

limits of our security," on any understanding reached.

The prime minister supplied some glimpses of a new policy, but his statement evaded more questions than it answered.

Does the scrapping of the Arrow, for instance, mean the curtain is being brought down on conventional arms, and that Canada is to become a nuclear-arms power? Will the primary function of the Canadian defence be to guard the northern approaches to the United States? Will the weapons we are now acquiring from the United States really protect us? And how much will our dubious new protection cost? The fact that the U.S. treasury will pay a large share of the cost is irrelevant, for we may well be getting what we really do not need or want.

The decision to drop the Arrow is sound on both the military and financial grounds. It also appears to mark the crossing of a new Rubicon in our strategic thinking. However, the government has not yet told the public what lies on the other side. Mr. Diefenbaker has supplied one negative decision, a few hints, and some facts. He has not given the kind of broad, clear and straightforward report the nation has the right to expect at this crucial point. He has scrapped the Arrow; he has torn the shreds of what stood for a defence policy, and he has put nothing in its place.

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