



# AVRO ARROW

## Black Friday

- Shaky Start
- Triumph
- Deterioration
- Black Friday**

### Black Friday

June 24, 1999



Black Friday, Feb 20th, 1959 was the day of epiphany for the Avro Arrow. At 11:00 a.m., Prime Minister John Diefenbaker announced before the House of Commons the decision, reached behind closed doors, to terminate the Arrow and Iroquois programs.

That day 14,525 workers were to leave the Avro plant unemployed. A small percentage were rehired later, but the vast majority were cast into the job market. The employees at Avro found out pretty quickly that their jobs were on the line when a loudspeaker announced the PM's decision at 11:20 a.m. They were at first told to keep working until further notice. That came later in the day, after several meetings by the management. All paid employees were to be immediately laid off.



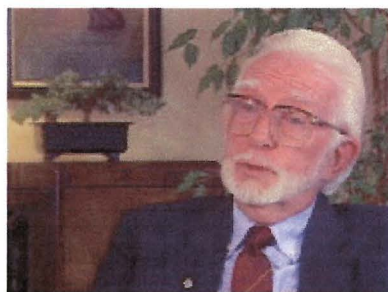
*Employees leaving Avro that day*

Hear test pilot [Jan Zurakowski](#), the first man to fly an Arrow, remember Black Friday

After the announcement, employees wandered around in disbelief. They had expected slowdowns, but neither management nor workers had anticipated the sudden cancellation. It was only two weeks until

the Iroquois engine was set to fly in tests that were expected to break the world speed record. In any event, officials like Defence Minister George Pearkes had repeatedly given their assurance to Avro management that the program would not be cancelled. Since the previous year, a reassessment of the program had been scheduled for March. Why the sudden cancellation?

We know now that the decision to cancel had already been deeply rooted in the thinking of Diefenbaker's cabinet, and may have been set in stone when Canada signed onto the NORAD treaty with the U.S. But it was politically expedient, to say the least, that the cancellation take place before the Iroquois be flown. If speed records were broken, canceling the Arrow would have been much more difficult. The promise of a March reassessment was the good tactic to lull Avro into complacency, and make cancellation easier.



[Read Avro VP of Design Jim Floyd's recollections of the cancellation of the Arrow.](#)

Story by:

[Brahm Rosensweig](#)



What Other EXN Visitors Think  
About This Story

*Click the button to add your opinion*

No comments posted yet.

---

[Birth of the Arrow](#) | [Trouble on the Horizon](#) | [Dark Days](#) | [Post Mortem](#) | [Enduring Legend](#)

[Aviation Television on the Discovery Channel](#)