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# AVRO ARROW

## Mystique

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One of the things that is most remarkable about the Arrow affair is the way it has fascinated and inflamed people who were not even born when the affair took place. The issues the Arrow raised seem to be timeless. Jim Floyd, the Arrow's chief designer and a defender of the Avro accomplishments in his eighties, complains that he can barely get to the podium to give his lectures at elementary schools because he's so mobbed by children. At the same time, the blind worship of the Arrow has roused the ire of fact-minded historians who become the legend's detractors.

Perhaps the greatest recent culprit in the mythologization of the Arrow was the CBC dramatization of 1996 that took great liberties with the facts. They even featured the mythical 'Arrow that got away' flying into the sunset. This mini-series sparked a heated backlash of those seeking to reality-check the situation. The important thing is that the Arrow legend is founded in fact: the Arrow was an outstanding design and the reasons for its cancellation and destruction are far from 100 percent clear.

But the elements that were most poignant in 1959 still strike a chord today. Canadian political decisions of the day were marked by poor planning, destructive partisan politics, technological shortsightedness, and the sneaking conviction that Canada lacked what it took to create first-rate, competitive products on a world class scale. It's no wonder that the Arrow affair is still relevant today.

But the crux of the legend is the way it summarized a critical point of Canadian history. One major factor that was alive and real in the fifties and which is not relevant today is that the Canada of that time appeared to stand at a industrial crossroads. During World War II, Canada had become heavily and successfully industrialized. After the

The Arrow, evidence of Canadian industrial ingenuity that could result in a world class product, came to be the symbol of this national ambition. The cancellation of the Arrow was the insult and its seemingly vandalistic destruction the injury that reverberated through time. Whether the course of Canadian history would really have been different if the Arrow had stayed aloft is a question for historians and economists to settle – for the rest of us, the Arrow continues to exist as a symbol.

Story by:  
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