

Editorial

CHANGE OF DIRECTION

It is disquieting news, and another indication of the Government's aimless fumbling in matters of defence, to learn that consideration is being given to re-equipping some of the RACF's Air Defence Command CF-100's with surplus USAF McDonnell F-101B's, a supersonic two-place all-weather fighter. When a military aircraft, especially an operational type, becomes surplus to the using service's needs, it is immediately suspect. It follows that if it is surplus it must be either tired or obsolescent. But this alone is not the cause for our uneasiness (because the Voodoo is at least a more modern fighter than the CF-100). It is that the consideration of any CF-100 replacement at all is a sign that the Government has turned at least 90° from the policy which a scant 12 months ago washed out the Arrow. This vacillation and uncertainty has characterized the Government's handling of defence matters ever since it took office. There is evidence that this inability to cope with basic problems and lamentable lack of direction overlaps into other fields (see editorial opposite). We can only hope that the Government is on a rapidly rising learning curve and with experience will come more intelligent handling of defence affairs.

THE NEW HAZARD

To such traditional flying bogeys as ice and fog, now must be added the name of a new hazard to aviation, Minister of Transport George Hees.

Late last month, the Minister announced that he was throwing the field of Group B charter operations open to all comers, extending the policy established for Group C operations in July 1958. This staggering body blow was delivered without warning or prior consultation with the Industry.

With a Smile: To add insult to injury, the Minister appeared on the national news to comment smilingly that several operators had expressed *enthusiasm* to him over the extension of the "open" policy. Unless it is castration, we cannot think of anything less likely to arouse enthusiasm in any charter operator.

One of the reasons given for the decision to extend the policy was that as a result of Group C experience, Mr. Hees "was satisfied that there had been a resultant increase in the amount of service available to the public in general by aircraft of this type." It takes no intelligence to reason that such a result is bound to follow if you start handing out licenses to anybody asking for one. There is now more service available, yes. But what kind of service? Since neither the DoT nor the ATB had sufficient staff to enforce their regulations even before the introduction of the open policy, it is not difficult to visualize the situation that can develop as many of the new operators — scrambling to get established — find that they can cut corners and rates without fear of penalty.

Apparently Mr. Hees regards small and medium plane charter operations as a form of mass transportation, an impression that could not be further from the truth. In actual fact, the market for this type of service is by nature limited and seasonal. Linked closely to the development of natural resources and the servicing of base industries in isolated areas, growth is slow. What has happened in the Group C field and will now happen in the Group B field is simply that basically the same pie will be cut into smaller and smaller pieces.

The Public Will Suffer: Last year, one established operator commented in *AIRCRAFT* on the likely effects of the open policy: "For many years, the transportation industry has been carefully controlled for the protection of the general public . . . in such branches as bus services, rail and ship services, air services and even in such things as taxi cabs, where the general procedure is to license taxis relative to the population of a given area.

"With proper tariff control, this is an advantage to the travelling public because it provides a service the year 'round, and around the clock, a service that would not likely be available if anybody and everybody could get into the act for rush periods and at their own convenience.

"Whether or not granting licenses freely in the charter field will be an advantage to the public is very much open to question and it occurs to me that in the long haul, the public will have to suffer by having to travel in old, tired airplanes, using underpaid personnel and pushing weather in order to keep out of the hands of the Receiver."