

editorial

All-party defence group is within reach at last

Any satisfaction we might have found in saying "We told you so" about the Boeing Bomarc missile, is soured by our concern over damage done to the Canadian aircraft industry by its adoption.

Armed only with common sense and the valuable advice of our military correspondent, John Gellner, we saw through the move to procure the Bomarc way back in 1958.

We shouted ourselves hoarse in an endeavour to attract attention to the futility of installing this weapon in Canada in preference to manned interceptors. We sent copies of our editorials to Prime Minister Diefenbaker and his Cabinet, to members of Parliament of all political shades, and to newspapers across Canada, in the U. S. and in Britain.

The response was, to say the least, discouraging. We were ignored by the late government (of course), gently applauded by some sections of the press, and said to be biased by people outside the aviation industry.

We were, and are biased. We like to see Canadian industry thrive, and we want the best possible defence for Canada that we can afford. There is one thing that we are extra specially biased about: We like to see as big a slice of the Canadian defence budget spent in Canada as possible.

Diefenbaker championed the Bomarc

four years ago and made disparaging statements about the Avro Arrow because it suited his political purpose. With the suggestion that the end of the manned bomber was fast approaching, he created a vague innuendo that the Bomarc was useful as an anti-missile device. He did not bother to correct this wrong interpretation until four years later when the political climate had changed. Then he turned on the Bomarc.

It troubles us that political leaders have this ability to divert and restrict a sound defence policy to serve some party political whim, and render it virtually useless. They pose as experts on defence when in fact most of them are mere Babes in the Wood on the subject.

Which brings us again to the suggestion that an all-party committee, guided by military advisers, should be created to formulate our defence policy on a logical and continuing basis. This is a suggestion we have made before — and it was an undertaking given by Lester Pearson during the recent election campaign.

Prime Minister Pearson should be reminded about this undertaking, which seems likely to meet with the approval of all parties. Running a minority government need be no handicap to effecting this particular piece of legislation; go to it Mr. Prime Minister.

Peter Brannan