

Editorial

A DEBT UNPAID

As a result of our research into the history of the Noorduyt Norseman we became very much aware that is so often the case with homegrown products, the considerable significance of this aircraft as a milestone in the development of the art has never been fully appreciated in its homeland. Peter Masefield, now managing director of the U.K.'s Bristol Aircraft Ltd., in 1943 ranked it as being in a class by itself. It is the only Canadian airplane to be included in the collection of the National Air Museum (though not on display) of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Yet in spite of such ready international recognition of the Norseman, its designer was never accorded any formal honor in Canada to mark the magnitude of his achievement. Should not something be done to rectify this gross oversight?

THE FOUNDATION STANDS

With the two major F-104 contracts having been settled in the past month, it now becomes possible to assess with some certainty the situation in which Canada's Aircraft Industry finds itself today, seven months after the cancellation of the Arrow.

During the postwar years, the Industry, largely under military sponsorship, has followed two principle lines of endeavour: design and development of advanced military aircraft, and production of a wide spectrum of civil and military aircraft.

Bearing Fruit: The fruits of the first part of this policy were the CF-100, the Orenda, the Arrow and the Iroquois, though the latter two were plucked before they were quite ripe. The chief beneficiaries of the design and development policy were Avro Aircraft and Orenda Engines. It followed that these two companies would be the hardest hit when the policy was brought abruptly to an end.

The termination of advanced aircraft design and development in Canada, for the foreseeable future at least, is indeed to be regretted. However, it has been done and now the job at hand is to make the best of the situation. And making the best of the situation involves appreciating the fact that engine and airframe production capacity has been little affected by the Government's actions. In other words, the base is still there. It is in fact, broader and far more deeply rooted than that on which the postwar industry started to rebuild.

The Long View: It is, perhaps, significant that the degree of concern with which the gravity of the situation is regarded, seems to be in direct ratio to the length of association with the Industry of those involved. Those who date their relationship back 20 years or more, tend to accept the situation with relative equanimity. They have seen it all before. They are fully aware that in spite of drastic set-backs from time to time, the Industry is incomparably stronger and bigger than it was when they first knew it. On the other hand, if the association has been confined to the upsurging days of the fifties, then the tendency is to write off the future prospects of the industry entirely.

It should be remembered that this Industry, like any other, is made up of a number of individual companies. With the exception of Avro Aircraft, all of these companies are in reasonably sound health and either have work assured for the next few years, or have projects of good prospect under development. In regard to Avro, the future is certainly fuzzy, but Sir Roy Dobson has been quoted in the U.K. press as expressing the intention of the company to stay in the aircraft manufacturing business.

We do not believe there is any reason for wide-eyed optimism; we do not believe that there is any one magic or easy or quick solution to the Industry's problems. But we do believe that the Industry has three important assets which assure its future: the ability to work hard, imagination, and the facilities to make the other two assets pay off. We do believe that Canada's Aircraft Industry will endure and grow.