

Steve Paikin (The Agenda) interviewed Avro engineer Liam Dwyer March 18 for a show called Defending Canadian Shores:

<https://www.tvO.org/video/defending-canadas-shores>



Steve says CAN I TAKE YOU TO THE NEXT CHAPTER OF YOUR LIFE?

LIAM SAYS CERTAINLY.

Steve says BECAUSE THERE'S LOTS OF PEOPLE WATCHING THIS WHO ARE GOING TO REMEMBER THE AVRO COMPANY, WHICH MADE THE AVRO ARROW, WHICH WAS THE BEST PLANE IN THE WORLD OF ITS KIND.

LIAM SAYS YEAH.

Steve says AND THEN, I THINK, IT'S IN FEBRUARY OF 1959...

A black and white picture shows workers assembling a jet plane inside a huge hangar.

Liam says YEAH, BLACK FRIDAY.

Steve says BLACK FRIDAY, YOU CALL IT. THERE'S THE PICTURE. THEY MADE 'EM IN MALTON, WHICH, I GUESS, IS THE TOWN OF MALTON, WHICH IS IN MISSISSAUGA TODAY.

LIAM SAYS YES.

Steve says AND YOU MADE THESE THINGS.

LIAM SAYS YEAH.

Steve says WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE AT THE CENTRE OF SUCH AN HISTORIC PROJECT AS THE AVRO ARROW?

Liam says IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT ALONG CAME A GROUP OF ENGINEERS WHO HAD A VISION THAT THEY COULD DESIGN AND BUILD AN AIRCRAFT THAT COULD FLY AT LEVEL FLIGHT AT TWICE THE SPEED OF SOUND...

1,600 MILES AN HOUR.

WHO COULD BELIEVE THAT?

AT THAT TIME, NATO WAS VERY STRONG AND EVERYBODY WAS NERVOUS.

THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT MISSILES AND WHAT HAVE YOU.

WE HAD A FIGHTER THAT COULD BE TAKEN OVER BY NATO AND BE ONE OF THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS. NOBODY COULD BELIEVE THAT.

AND I BELIEVE

THAT PEOPLE IN OTTAWA WHO HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAKING THE DECISION TO CONTINUE TO MAKE THE ARROW AND THE IROQUOIS ENGINE, THEY WERE...

THEY COULDN'T CONCEIVE THAT THEY COULD DO THAT, AND WE DID IT.

Steve says AND I WANT TO ASK YOU, TO THIS DAY... SO WE'RE NOW, WHAT IS THAT? SIXTY YEARS LATER, HOW MAD ARE YOU STILL AT PRIME MINISTER DIEFENBAKER FOR CANCELLING THE ARROW?

Liam says WELL, I'M NOT SO MAD AT DIEFENBAKER, AS I'M MAD AT THE PEOPLE WHO ADVISED DIEFENBAKER. DIEFENBAKER PUT HIS NAME ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SHEET THAT SAID CANCEL. HE WAS A LAWYER FROM THE MIDWEST. HE WASN'T AN AIRCRAFT MAN. THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO ADVISED HIM.

Steve says SO, YOU'RE MAD AT THEM.

Liam says POOR OLD DIEF TOOK THE...

Steve says HE TOOK THE HEAT FOR IT.

Liam says HE TOOK THE HEAT.

Steve says YEAH. NOW, AFTER THE DECISION WAS MADE TO CANCEL THE ARROW, THEY DESTROYED EVERYTHING, RIGHT? THEY DESTROYED THE PLANES, THEY DESTROYED EVEN THE BLUEPRINTS.

Liam says I WITNESSED THEM CHOPPING UP THE ARROW, THE FIVE ARROWS. THEY HAD A PIECE OF STEEL THE SIZE OF THIS TABLE SHARPENED UP. ON ONE END, THEY'D HOLD IT UP IN THE END, THEY'D DROP IT LIKE A GUILLOTINE AND CUT IT IN PIECES. THEY LOADED IT OUT OF TRUCKS AND POLICE ESCORT TOOK IT TO HAMILTON, TO THE SCRAPYARD.

Steve says DID IT JUST GET YOU RIGHT HERE TO WATCH THAT?

Liam says YEAH. OH, YEAH. IT WAS SICKENING. IT WAS SICKENING. AND I WAS IN THE ENGINE PLANT, AND WE HELD THE ENGINE FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS. SOME PEOPLE WERE INTERESTED IN THE ENGINE. WE WERE USING TITANIUM THAT HAD NEVER BEEN USED BEFORE. AND FINALLY, THEY SAID THAT THE IROQUOIS WAS CANCELLED. I TOOK 40 TRUCKLOADS OF DRAWINGS AND SPECIFICATIONS AND BURNT THEM. 40 TRUCKLOADS.