

Not to be Underestimated

The Korean war has had the effect of a fire built under the Canadian Government. Though, at that, this same Government seems to have such thick skin that it is taking quite some time for the heat to penetrate. What with action that has been taken in the past few weeks and action which we surmise will be taken in the time to come, a picture of the RCAF to be is slowly forming. It now appears evident that we shall at long last have an Air Force in being by the end of 1951.

Peaceful Lull: The size of this Air Force will depend entirely on what develops in Korea. If there is a termination of hostilities there, followed by a lengthy and deceptively peaceful lull, then the fighter strength of the RCAF will likely be stabilized at something like 300 F-86As and approximately 150 CF-100s. However, if the present hot situation keeps getting hotter, then it seems fairly certain that all the stops will be out.

Whatever happens, transport will play a far bigger role in the RCAF's operations than it did in World War II. Whether by accident or design, we don't know, but the RCAF fortunately had just what the U.S. needed most in the way of *immediate* material assistance for the Korean business—transport aircraft. The purchase of the 22 Canadair North Stars by the Department of National Defence for RCAF use has in the past been harshly criticized by the Opposition, and even now the importance of the job being carried out by 426 Transport Squadron is being seriously underestimated by many.

The *Toronto Globe & Mail*, for instance, recently pointed out that when the RCAF had taken delivery of 22 North Stars... "It had no immediate use for them. For the price it paid, the RCAF could have outfitted four squadrons with British Vampire jet fighters and still have had enough to pay for the North Star transports now in Japan. Which seems the wiser—to equip our Air Force with cargo planes for which at best it had a limited use, or with fighter planes?" If this is a widely held opinion, then it is a faulty one. The Air Force should have certainly had more fighter aircraft (and there was no immediate use for these either, at the time the North Stars were bought), but at the same time it had to have a strong Transport Command.

Dumb Luck: In our opinion, the very fact that the Canadian Government was able to send ten trans-

port aircraft has completely vindicated them from any suspicion that a mistake had been made. However, we are inclined to think that possession of the North Stars at the opportune time was more a matter of dumb luck than of wisdom. The christening of the Avro Canada CF-100 with the completely inappropriate designation "Canuck" (see box) only emphasizes that those who guide the destinies of the RCAF could not have had sufficient imagination to purchase the North Stars because they felt there might actually be a need for them.

In World War II the RCAF to a large extent depended on the air services of other nations for air transport. It operated large numbers of DC-3s, but few if any four engine types. Obviously any coming war will require many very long supply lines—as witness the one which 426 Squadron is helping to maintain—so that we will need numbers of long range, high payload, transport types. In the main, the only aircraft capable of meeting these requirements are of the four engine variety. Even if Canada's fighter force to be is employed entirely on this continent, in, say, Alaska and the Territories, there will still be an urgent need for long range transports. Spares for CF-100s and F-86As will have to be flown from Toronto and Montreal respectively, distances in the 2,500 to 3,000 mile range.

Painful Pinch: Now, just as obviously, the U.S. is painfully pinched for transports with which to maintain the Pacific supply lines while the Korean war continues. The MATS had to charter no less than 63 transports from commercial air lines in the U.S. Is there any wonder that we say Canada could not have made a more welcome immediate contribution than a squadron of long range transports? (Unless it be a multitude of squadrons.)

At the same time, it is now easy to see that the RCAF is going to have to supply its own transports in future. Where else will they be obtained? The recent cuts (now restored) in RAF expenditures were mostly at the expense of Transport Command, so no help can be expected from that source; and as we have already pointed out,

the U.S. is in a borrowing state of mind, not a lending one.

And so, never mind why the Canadian Government purchased North Stars, be thankful they did. And let us hope that in planning a well balanced RCAF, the need for maintaining a strong Transport Command is not being overlooked.

OH, BROTHER!

... Is not a very violent expression, but it's the strongest one we can make in print about the name selected for Avro Canada's CF-100 fighter—the "Canuck". Avro Canada, incidentally, had nothing to do with the selection of this name. Just for the record, the guilty parties are Defence Minister Brooke Claxton and Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal W. A. Curtis (who certainly should be known better). Their choice was given the hearty approval of that august body, the Cabinet. We always thought leadership required imagination.

Long Range Transports Are Just as Important to the RCAF as Fighters