

# A place for the Arrow in his heart

Hollywood star wanted the chance to recreate a seminal moment in modern Canadian history

BY GREG QUILL  
TELEVISION CRITIC

"I had an Avro Arrow model when I was a kid in Kingston," Dan Aykroyd said in a recent interview, by way of explaining his fascination with the TV miniseries *The Arrow*.

"And my mother worked for (Liberal 'minister of everything') C.D. Howe as an executive secretary. She knew what was going on."

This was a difficult part for Aykroyd, not known for his dramatic roles (*Driving Miss Daisy* notwithstanding). But he had a special feeling about *The Arrow* miniseries, in which he's also credited as a consultant.

"It started out as a TV movie, then a theatrical feature. No one was buying. Against the judgment of my agent,

## Review of *The Arrow* miniseries, B8

who strongly resists the idea of my doing TV, I took it on. I'm helping to sell it to other countries. I entertained potential financiers. I'm doing interviews.

"Besides, this is something for my country, and for CBC. I care about both. (He still owns a home in Kingston.) And it's a great role.

Aykroyd plays Crawford Gordon, president of the A. V. Roe company developing the Arrow and head of the jet project.

"The hardest part was playing Gordon's demise. There was nothing funny in it at all. We're almost a perfect physical match, but after the *Arrow* collapse, he collapsed and died from cirrhosis a few years after he was sacked. It was very hard to convey his despair in a single scene, without much dialogue, a real challenge."

Aykroyd, best known for his comedy work in movies (*The Blues Brothers*, *Ghostbusters*) and on *Saturday Night Live*, still remembers the shock of watching the A. V. Roe company in its death throes in 1958, even though

he was only 7 years old.

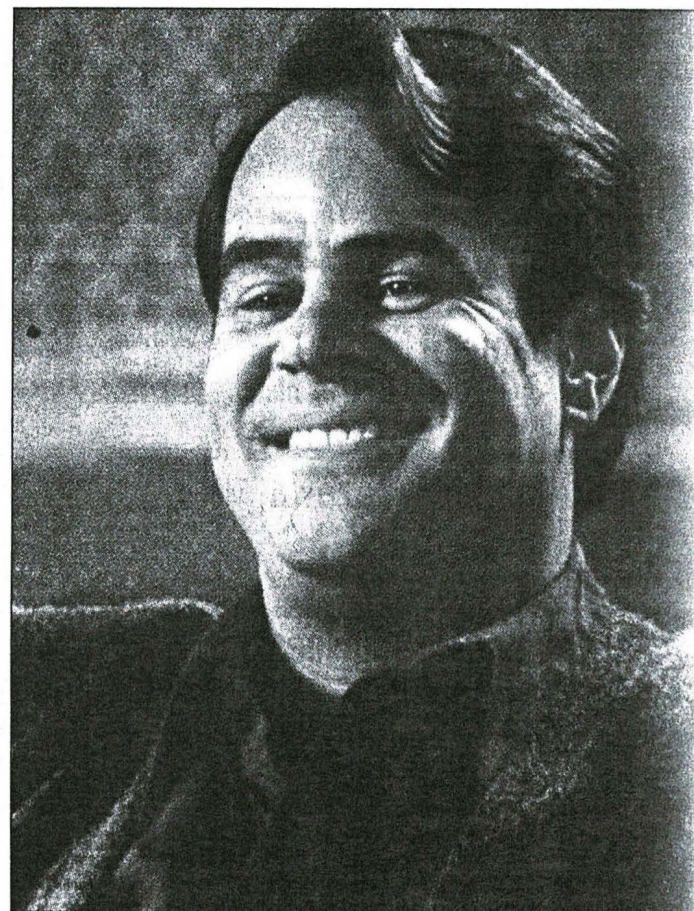
"I know now it was killed by politics and bad business, that (Prime Minister John) Diefenbaker hated people who'd grown too rich at the taxpayers' expense, Bay St. bankers and brokers.

"What I can't buy is the destruction of the A. V. Roe company. It was developing metallurgical industries, electronics. It would have been beautiful.

"And I can't buy Dief's vindictiveness. It was one thing to kill the Arrow because it was costing too much, but to demolish every bit of evidence that the plane ever existed was unforgivable.

"I did a lot of research for this show, and I think what's in the movie is very close to what happened. Gordon did leave his briefing notes on the train to Ottawa for his confrontation with Diefenbaker, he was drunk, he pounded the desk, he screamed at the P.M. A journalist in the waiting room heard it all.

"What neither of them understood was that so many Canadians loved this plane, and 50,000 people worked for A. V. Roe. Their jobs and their dreams vanished overnight."



**SOMETHING FOR MY COUNTRY:** Dan Aykroyd decided to return to TV and to drama because of his patriotism and his belief in the CF

A.V.Roe Canada Aviation Museum Association

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Avro Reference \_\_\_\_\_

Accession No. 757

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