

# Jetliner Suspension Caused Controversy

On June 14, 1951, C. D. Howe rose in the House of Commons and announced that work was suspended on the Avro Jetliner.

The same day, Gordon Graydon, Progressive Conservative member for Peel, commented: "The Jetliner was a source of great pride to the workmen and management at Malton and had put Canada out in the lead as far as that type of machine was concerned. A magnificent job was done and it will yield great benefits when the opportunity comes to carry the project forward again."

These statements were the epitaph for Avro's chance at leadership in the commercial aircraft industry.

The silver and gold Jetliner first flashed through the skies over Malton Airport Aug. 10, 1949. At this point it represented three years of research and about \$6,000,000 in development costs, a program heavily subsidized by the Federal Government.

James C. Floyd, the man who designed the Jetliner, delivered a technical paper the following January in which he outlined some of the difficulties overcome in the few days just before the first test.

The company had wanted to power the craft with two Rolls-Royce Avon engines, but these became unavailable for commercial use so Rolls-Royce Derwents, four in number, were substituted, making a change in design necessary.

Then, just 13 days before the test, the British deHavilland Comet lifted her wheels off the runway to be the first jet transport in the world to fly. Shortly before the flight, the Department of Transport tore up the runways at Malton leaving only one strip of asphalt for the test. The week before the flight the temperature was at 103 degrees. In a preliminary attempt, all four tires on the landing gear blew. On the great day, a cross

wind was blowing. Two tires blew before takeoff and had to be replaced.

By January, 1950, all these seemed small troubles. Tests were nearing completion. The plane had flown 30 times and survived a wheels-up landing with only minor damage.

Her first public flight was covered by U.S. television, a distinct honor in those early days. Plans were announced to fly her, with the brand new CF-100, to Farnborough for the big show staged by the Society of British Aircraft Constructors.

Then she began to set records. With Chief Test Pilot Donald Rogers at the wheel she whirled to Ottawa and staged a spectacular show in conjunction with the CF-100. She flew to New York and wowed the natives of Manhattan.

Then it was announced that the plane was too busy on this side of the water to go to Farnborough. U.S. airlines were reported interested. Mr. Rogers flew her to Boston, to New York, Chicago, Winnipeg, Quebec City and Tampa. The United States evaluated her worth as a military transport but never announced results.

By now, a year had passed. The Jetliner was a sensation, a credit to the country and due to make Canada Queen of the Skies, said the editorial writers. But no one wanted to buy it, or so it appeared.

TCA announced it would test it as a transport but abandoned the plan. No ready cash appeared in the United States. The British had the Comet.

At almost the same time as Mr. Howe's announcement, Northwest Airlines said it would take 10 but it was too late. The program was dropped in spite of the fact that a second prototype designed to eliminate difficulties in the first was under way.

If the case of the CF-105 proves similar to that of the Jetliner, much will be revealed in retrospect.

The total price of the Jetliner came close to \$10,000,000 with the Canadian taxpayer footing about \$7,000,000 of the bill.

In 1953, TCA was charged with having tentatively ordered the plane but backing out when it turned out to be bigger (50 passengers) and with longer range (1,500 miles) than specified. TCA said there had been no signed contract.

In 1956, the Government was accused of dropping the Jet-

liner just when U.S. companies became interested. The Government claimed it was sacrificed in favor of the Korean War effort.

One thing is certain. Canada matched Britain in getting the first Jetliner into the air on a consistent service basis and the possibility exists that due to the delay in the Comet program resulting from tragic crashes, this country might have been far ahead.

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