

*Labour Crisis in Aircraft Industry*

when one considers that there is today more unemployment than at any time since the thirties and there is simply no absorptive capacity available to the skilled workers engaged in the aircraft industry, if it would not have been better for the government to have negotiated some of these future production sharing contracts with the United States before it cancelled this program and threw these many thousands of workers out on the street. It was the way in which it was done which in our opinion is most tragic.

The Prime Minister was very forthright in his statement. "Frankness demands", he said, "that I advise that at present there is no other work that the government can assign immediately to the companies that have been working on the Arrow and its engine". This unequivocal statement was applauded by some newspapers, and one evening paper in Toronto described it as courageous. It was not courageous but cruel. It was cruel, heartless and incredibly short-sighted.

If the government decided that the Avro Arrow was not the most important machine necessary to our defence at the present time we would be obliged to go along with that decision and it must be accepted, but the fact which cannot be accepted is that at a time when there is obviously a very urgent military requirement for some defence machinery the government should, after 18 months, simply cancel the contract overnight without giving adequate consideration as to what it should do in lieu thereof.

This lack of consideration and consultation is something we deeply deplore. We are told by the company that from last September until last Friday noon there was no effort on the part of the government to sit down with the company to decide whether or not it should proceed, whether or not it should develop some new piece of military hardware, whether or not it should produce some piece of equipment of United States design, or just what it should do. There was no effort made to sit down across a table and make plans to salvage and keep in effect the accumulated benefit of billions of dollars of expenditure and years and years of technical advance. This is an unbelievable indictment, and if it is not true we would like the Prime Minister to say so.

It is not as though the government has had insufficient time for consideration. It has been in office long enough to have made up its mind. Surely 18 months—or even more, 20—is sufficient time to evaluate the military requirements of this country, to consider our place in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, our place in NORAD, what our contribution to the total defence effort of the Atlantic

communities should be and how best we can proceed to provide it. Certainly what we need is positive decision, and not after these intervening months a negative decision only.

Had there been consultation with the company there is an infinite variety of possibilities that could have emerged from such meetings. We would like to hear from the Prime Minister what some of the possibilities are. Surely the defence experts have given to the government some indication of the things that are available, the solutions which should be considered. An executive of the Avro complex yesterday made a statement to the press in which he indicated that the government had not bothered to consult with the company and had not sat down with the highly trained technical and skilled people there in an effort to employ their collective judgment to assist the government in this matter. He went on to cite some of the possibilities which might have been considered, and I am sure he put forward just a few of them.

First of all the government should have made some arrangement for the orderly slowing down or the orderly discharge of the workers there if it made up its mind there was no other recourse. Surely it could have considered the possibility of building some other aircraft to make available to our air division overseas. Surely it could have considered the possibility of manufacturing missiles and other defence equipment. Surely the government has been considering these questions for 18 months. Has it reached any positive decisions yet? If not, why not? This is a very serious matter indeed, and the lack of consultation is something we cannot condone.

The dislocation this decision has caused is a matter of deep and grave concern to all Canadians. It is national in scope and affects people from one end of this country to the other. It also affects industry over a very broad band of our nation. The immediate result, of course, has been a crisis which has developed as to whether or not we will be able to salvage and retain in Canada the technical personnel who have been accumulated and whose skills have been built up over the years. As early as Saturday morning there were in Toronto representatives of United States aircraft manufacturing concerns ready and waiting. They telephoned our scientific personnel offering to engage them and take them south of the border.

Some of the individual cases are tragic indeed. A number telephoned me over the week end and told of their individual circumstances. Surely these people are deserving of our consideration. I should like to place on the record just one or two instances

[Mr. Hellyer.]