

*Abandonment of Defence Projects*

This airport was approved by the former government, and it was also approved by this government, for operation as a jet training base. The minister said that Penhold is the logical site for a jet training base, and the people of Red Deer, from the information I have been able to gather, are still infuriated over the decision of the Minister of National Defence. Let me put on the record what they are saying, as appears in an article in the *Edmonton Journal* of October 1, 1963:

Despite his—

—meaning the minister—

—denials it seems fairly obvious that it is pressure from Calgary and Edmonton, funnelled into the cabinet through agricultural minister Harry Hays, that has caused the change in plans. Mr. Hellyer has fired a torpedo into the economic life of Red Deer and central Alberta.

The minister has advanced as a reason for closure the matter of safety. Let us take a closer look at that. Take, for example, the Winnipeg base. All hon. members at one time or another have no doubt flown out of the Winnipeg base, and are well aware of the fact that huge airliners carrying more than 100 passengers are only a few hundred feet above residential areas when climbing into the air. So far no one has suggested that the Winnipeg airport ought to be closed. Mention has been made of a 20 mile buffer zone, but nowhere in the regulations of the department of defence or the Department of Transport is there any reference to a 20 mile buffer zone. Therefore I ask what foundation there is for the suggestion that safety is the overriding factor. As I understand the buffer zone idea, it means between the air space allocated for jet training, and controlled air space. They argue that it did not leave sufficient air space for jet training to be carried out. This provided a good talking point for the public and an easy point to sell to the public, and was used as an excuse for closing the airport. If safety is the factor involved here, are the same rules to be applied elsewhere in Canada? Is this safety factor, which has been seized upon here as a precedent, to be the overriding factor to be considered from one end of Canada to the other? If it is, I wish the minister and his officials would take a look at what is happening at Moose Jaw, Portage la Prairie and Gimli. These places do not have a 20 mile zone. I should say not. Take the case of Moose Jaw which is only eight miles from one of the busiest airways in Canada. Portage la Prairie is less than 15 miles from the busy Trans-Canada Air Lines route. Gimli is about 12 miles from the main airway. Each of these airports is within 20 miles of the main airway. In view of this does the minister continue to rely on this one factor as

his excuse for closing down Penhold, or does he intend to think up another manoeuvre which, he hopes, will get him off the hook?

Civilian air training is another matter which has been mentioned. Well, this is going on in every airport in Canada. Students with only six hours' training are landing and taking off at all airports which big jets are using. How can it be said that safety is the overriding factor which caused the minister to issue the order concerning Penhold? Did these considerations of safety only just come to life, despite the fact that the whole matter has been under review for many months? The Department of National Defence knew, and the minister knew, that planes were flying between Calgary and Edmonton on regular routes before they called for tenders to increase the length of the runways. They knew these facts before they called for bids to construct additional buildings. How, in the name of good sense, can the minister come before us now and say that the overriding factor responsible for his decision was the question of safety? The hon. gentleman has known about the situation there ever since he became minister.

The people of the Red Deer area are firmly convinced that there is a nigger in the wood pile, that some other consideration is involved. What they are after is to find out a little more about the unexplained motives. There are reasons which still remain hidden, in the opinion of many people. I have before me an article which appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* of April 1 entitled "Safety? That Excuse is Nonsense". Here is what it says:

Central Alberta has been sold short by Mr. Hellyer for political purposes and the repercussions will be felt for many years to come.

To illustrate once again feelings of the local people, I wish to quote from the Calgary daily *Herald* of October 2, 1963 in which an article appeared stating:

The Red Deer chamber of commerce strongly suggests that the reasons given for the government's reversed decision are evasive, and that we have a right to know the background of so serious a matter to our economy. We intend to pursue this matter until we are satisfied not only for our own selfish reasons but for all the taxpayers of Canada.

The people of the Red Deer area have adjusted their economy to the presence of this airport, and what is taking place there will vitally affect their well-being.

May I say in conclusion that, although the interests of safety have been advanced as the overriding reason for closing this airport, we feel there must be other factors. We have not yet heard the minister tell us in detail how the safety factors are to be applied to other airports—whether the same ground-rules are to be used in all the airports of Canada. The inconsistencies in this respect