

PROJECT MAGNET

THE RECORDS INDICATE THAT THE FIRST CANADIAN GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION WAS THROUGH A PROJECT IDENTIFIED AS "PROJECT MAGNET". IT WAS SET UP IN DECEMBER 1950 BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. WILBERT B. SMITH, CHIEF OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRONICS BRANCH. MR. SMITH WAS ALREADY INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED IN HIS FIELD, HELD A NUMBER OF PATENTS AND HAD RECEIVED SEVERAL AWARDS FOR HIS WORK IN RADIO. IN OTHER WORDS, HE WASN'T SOME KIND OF A NUT.

THIS WAS A SMALL PROGRAM USING DOT FACILITIES WITH ASSISTANCE OF OTHER GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE DEFENCE RESEARCH BOARD. HIS PROGRAM, AS HE PUT IT, WAS TO "SYSTEMATICALLY QUESTION ALL OUR BASIC CONCEPTS IN THE HOPE OF TURNING UP A DISCREPANCY WHICH MIGHT PROVE TO BE THE KEY TO NEW TECHNOLOGY". HE ALSO DEVELOPED IDEAS FOR MEASURING THE RELIABILITY OF OBSERVATIONAL DATA AND USING THESE MEASUREMENTS TO RATE THE PROBABILITY THAT A GIVEN REPORT COULD BE ACCEPTED AS A REAL OBSERVATION.

IN 1952, PROJECT MAGNET RATED 25 REPORTS ACCORDING TO THIS METHOD, TEN OF WHICH WERE CONSIDERED TO BE UNCONVENTIONAL STRUCTURED OBJECT REPORTS WITH A HIGH PROBABILITY OF ACCURACY.

IN 1953, WHEN THE PROJECT'S REPORT CAME OUT, SMITH CONCLUDED:

"IT APPEARS THAT WE ARE FACED WITH A
SUBSTANTIAL PROBABILITY OF THE REAL
EXISTENCE OF EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL VEHICLES.
SUCH VEHICLES MUST OF NECESSITY USE A
TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERABLY IN ADVANCE OF
WHAT WE HAVE."

THE PROJECT WAS DROPPED BY DOT IN OCTOBER 1954 BUT SMITH WAS PERMITTED TO CONTINUE USING THE FACILITIES ON HIS OWN WITHOUT GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT.