

DOT DENIES PROJECT MAGNET CONTINUES TO EMBARRASS OFFICIALDOM BUT ONE EMPLOYEE BELIEVED SAUCERS REALLY EXISTED...

In the early 1950's a group known as "Project Magnet" carried out unidentified flying object research at the Department of Transport's atmospheric study centre near Shirley's Bay — at present the site of a research centre operated by the Defence and Communications departments.

Project Magnet is no mystery in itself: it was primarily a systematic study of 25 "credible" UFO sightings. What is puzzling, however, is the question of who, if anyone, authorized the project.

The study was headed by Wilbert B. Smith, an Ottawa engineer who worked for the telecommunications branch of the Department of Transport from 1939 until his death in 1962. Smith, who held BSc. and MSc. degrees in electrical engineering, worked on a number of important projects for the transport ministry before, during and after Project Magnet.

Wilbert Smith had official backing from the department from 1950 until 1954," says Arthur Bray, a UFO "hobbyist" of 25 years who has collected a number of Smith's papers on Project Magnet. "After that he and his colleagues continued on their own, although they were allowed to use department equipment."

"...during the four years they investigated 25 of the most credible sightings and concluded that the probability was that a number of them were in the alien vehicle class."

"Probability"
Smith submitted a report on Project Magnet in 1954 which states, in part: "It appears that we are faced with a substantial probability of the real existence of extra-terrestrial vehicles, regardless

of whether or not they fit into our scheme of things."

The puzzler is that although Smith believed that Project Magnet enjoyed official backing, the Department of Transport continues to deny it.

A Department spokesman contacted this week confirmed that Smith was a departmental employee but maintained that Project Magnet was a private study.

Wilbert Smith used to do UFO studies on his own, but they never had any official status. People thought it was a Ministry of Transport project but there's no such project on departmental records.

A letter sent to Bray from the Department's Telecommunications and Electronics Branch in 1964 contains a similar theme:

"I would advise that at no time has this Department carried out research in the field of unidentified flying objects."

"The late Mr. W.B. Smith, an employee of this

Department... did study unidentified flying objects as a personal hobby. The Department did not take part in any of his research work nor did Mr. Smith provide the Department with any useful information arising out of his work."

Contradictory

These statements are in



Wilbert B. Smith worked on "Project Magnet" under the impression that he had the backing of his employers, but the Transport Department denies it

sharp contrast to those Bray has in his files. The first comes from the preamble to Smith's Project Magnet report:

"Project Magnet was authorized in December, 1950, by Commander C. P. Edwards, then Deputy Minister of Transport for Air Services, for the purpose of making as detailed a study of saucer phenomena as could be made within the framework of existing establishments. The Broadcast and Measurements Section of the Telecommunications Division were given the directive to go ahead with this work with whatever assistance could be obtained informally from outside sources such as Defence Research Board and National Research Council."

If Smith was deluding himself, then his attention to detail was certainly praiseworthy.

In 1968 Peter M. Millman, then head of the National Research Council's Upper Atmosphere Research, sent Bray a copy of Smith's Project Magnet report. With it was a covering letter which appears to contradict the Transport Department's official view on the matter:

"I have been informed by the Department of Transport that although Project Magnet was officially authorized by the Department, work on this Project was carried out almost entirely by Mr. W.B. Smith and was in the nature of a spare-time activity."

The letter goes on to state that Smith's conclusions were entirely his own and not those of the Department but Millman's understanding that the study was "officially authorized" represents a considerable departure from



By Bill Turpin

Transport's public stance on the matter.

What's interesting is that although the Transport Department is quite familiar with Project Magnet, their reaction is to disavow any association with it when their public relations efforts would perhaps be better directed at refuting Mr. Smith's conclusions.

Hmmm...



Part of the Shirley's Bay research centre where Wilbert Smith carried out "Project Magnet" in the 1950's

Sunday Express
(Montreal)

30 May 1976