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UFO Canada study ordered

By MAURICE WESTERN
Journal Parliamentary Bureau

As the Canada Council is known to be insatiably curious, few will be surprised to read that $6,000 have been invested in a study of Canadian reports of Unidentified Flying Objects. There is, however, something intriguing about the explanation provided by the council in response to a written question in Parliament.

The award, suitably enough, comes under the Explorations program. The explorer, a Mr. Musgrave, is to catalogue old sightings of strange aerial phenomena as reported in Canadian newspapers, journals and local histories, and to interview people who have witnessed such phenomena, especially prior to 1947.

It is clear from the wording of the question what troubled Bruce Halliday, the inquiring member of Parliament. Was the Council aware, he asked, that the United States Government spent over half a million dollars between 1966 and 1968 to have competent scientists conduct an intensive study of such reports, including Canadian reports, and that the conclusion (of the Condon report) was that there was no evidence to warrant any further scientific investigation? Mr. Halliday wondered also if there had been consultation with officers of the National Research Council about the advisability of funding such a study.

The problem with the answer is that the Council, on this occasion, appears to protest too much. If one part of the answer is correct, it is very difficult to make sense of the other part.

UNIDENTIFIED
in Hamilton Wednesday

There was, in fact, no consultation with anyone at NRC. This is perfectly understandable because "the focus of the project is historical rather than scientific."

If this is the nature of the inquiry, it is legitimate whether UFOs are substantial or unsubstantial. In either case, people believe that they have seen strange objects and their reports have been widely credited. Popular illusions, after all, are part of the history of the age.

But the Council seems strangely reluctant to defend the award on this simple basis. The decision, it reports, was based on an "independent appraisal by four scientifically qualified people who were undoubtedly aware of the Condon report; the chairman of the department of astronomy in an American university, the director of the Mutual UFO Network in the United States, a biologist, and the editor of the Canadian UFO report."

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