Saucers, Pancakes, and Such

The Air Force last week announced that after 15 years of tracking down reports of unidentified flying objects it has come across no evidence that we are receiving visits from other planets. This disappointing news was contained in the annual summary of the Air Force "Project Blue Book," which was set up in 1947, when the first flying saucers began to make the headlines. The Air Force still gets about 500 reports a year of strange objects in the sky, and has now become quite expert at classifying them. In recent years it has reported less than 2 percent as unexplained, down from something over 10 percent in the early years, although it is not clear how much of the improvement reflects the project's greater familiarity with the kinds of strange things people see in the sky, and how much indicates a more cavalier attitude toward categorizing what is seen. The key point is that out of all of the thousands of reports there is no well corroborated description of anything that would give evidence of visits from outer space. This satisfies the Air Force, but hardly satisfies the saucer fans.

The most striking cases, in which airplane pilots report an object which moved with them and then ran away when they chased it, involve phenomena related to rainbows, which of course appear to behave in just this fashion, giving the illusion of intelligent control.

So the saucers continue to fascinate a good many people, many of whom feel the Air Force isn't taking the business seriously enough, and some of whom are convinced that the Air Force knows perfectly well we are being visited, but is concealing the facts. Overton Brooks of Louisiana, the late chairman of the House Science Committee, was impressed enough that he set up a special subcommittee which was to hold hearings on the question. But Brooks died last fall, and the new chairman, George Miller, of California, promptly smothered the operation. The House Science Committee has made a singularly low impression on a great many people, and Miller apparently did not regard an investigation of flying saucers as a useful step in bolstering the group's prestige.

So the more passionate advocates of the interplanetary theory are full of suspicion again that the Air Force conspiracy has smothered the investigation. Meanwhile there is bitterness between two main groups of saucer fans: the ufologists and the saucerians. The ufologists (students of unidentified flying objects, or UFO's) range from people who are fascinated by the fact that people see strange things in the sky to people who are convinced that the strange things are space ships.

Saucerians go beyond merely seeing the saucers to seeing the creatures that ride inside them. The saucerians are inclined to suspect that the ufologists are in cahoots with the Air Force; the ufologists are inclined to think the saucerians are batty, but are hesitant to jump to conclusions since if it is, after all, reasonable on the evidence available to argue that the saucers may well come from outer space, one cannot rule out the possibility that their passengers may have been seen by some fortunate earthling.

Conspiracy

The difficulty shows up in a recent issue of the *UFO Investigator*, the publication of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, the leading ufologist group. It seems that NICAP has come under attack from certain saucerians, who claim that NICAP is covering up the Pancake case.

One Joe Simonton, a plumber in Eagle River, Wis., was visited, he reports, by a spacecraft which landed in his yard on 18 April. The crew appeared, thirsty, and Simonton traded them a pitcher of water for three pancakes. County Judge Frank W. Carter thereupon sent one of the pancakes to NICAP for analysis, which left NICAP stuck in pretty much the same position as the Air Force: namely of having to go to a great deal of trouble to prove the obvious, or else of being accused, as it accuses the Air Force, of conspiring to whitewash the whole business. NICAP may have been helped out of its dilemma by those cavalier people at the Air Force, who took the trouble to have another of the pancakes analyzed both in their own laboratory and at the Food and Drug Administration, demonstrating, to no one's surprise, that it was a pretty ordinary pancake. NICAP then reported that its own analysis had shown the same thing. Simonton's supporters, though, are just convinced that NICAP is in cahoots with the Air Force, and Simonton is keeping himself busy giving lectures on his startling experiences.

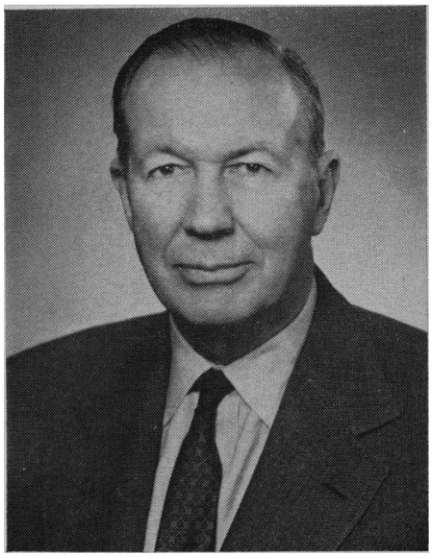
Disarmament Agency: It Has Suddenly Stepped into Public View

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, from which virtually nothing had been heard since its establishment last September, burst forth last week with a rash of publicity.

The agency's sudden emergence into public view followed a number of expressions of concern over the limited role it seemed to be assuming in Administration councils. These expressions were voiced privately by White House staff members and the agency's congressional supporters, and were finally reflected in press reports that indicated that the agency was off to a slow start, or worse.

Last week—whatever weight the agency may carry in the Administration—the public was educated to the fact that the agency is this nation's instrument for pulling the teeth out of the Cold War.

The attention bestowed on the agency comes at a time when it is in its formative stages and is considerably outweighed in stature and resources by some of the old-line agencies on whose interests it impinges, notably the Defense Department and the Atomic Energy Commission. Defense, with an annual budget in the neighborhood of $50 billion, and the AEC, which devotes $777 million of its $3-billion budget to weapons, are in the business of strengthening the nation's armament, and understandably show little warmth for a newcomer whose objective runs in the other direction. Congressional sympathy for this sentiment apparently accounted for the tiny budget with which the agency was launched: with $1 million left over from its predecessor, the State Department's Disarmament Administration, the agency sought another $4 million; Congress responded with just $1 million, and the agency went into operation with a budget of $2 million and what was interpreted as tacit advice that its job was to study disarmament and not campaign for it. A sort of hostage for good behavior existed in the form of a recess appointment for the agency's director, William C. Foster; congressional approval of the agency and Foster's designation as director came in the final week of the last session, thus leaving no time for Senate confirmation. The effect, regardless of the cause, was that for the first 4 months of the agency's life, its head man was in a status that did not



William C. Foster [Department of State]

encourage anything that might be interpreted as an adventurous course. No opposition to Foster was anticipated, and none developed; but coincidentally or not, the agency's blossoming in the public view almost immediately followed confirmation.

Economic Study

The first step involved publication of a report which had been in the agency's hands for over 3 months—a study which concluded that a drastic reduction in U.S. armament spending need not bring serious economic difficulties to the country if the government "exercises a modicum of economic sense, foresight and courageous leadership."

The report, which was produced by a panel headed by Emile Benoit, associate professor of international business at Columbia University, openly addressed itself to the economic concerns of the industrial-military complex in stating: "there exists a widespread and understandable fear, especially on the part of the defense industries and workers in these industries and in the armed forces, of economic disruptions connected with a disarmament agreement."

Noting that the chief obstacles to a reduction in arms expenditures would be "political resistance rather than deficiencies in our economic knowledge," the report added that "some of the most stubborn and difficult problems connected with disarmament will be those arising from the concentration of persons and productive resources in particular industries, areas, or vocational groups and from the difficulty of making the necessary shifts in employment and resources."

The recommendations offered by the panel include consideration of public works, strengthened unemployment compensation, retraining programs, reduced working hours, and, possibly, tax reductions. All of these have been raised before in various nongovernmental studies of the economics of disarmament, but their publication by the Disarmament Agency, despite a disclaimer that the panel's views are not necessarily the agency's views, elevates the subject in the public view and gives it the Administration's stamp of approval for serious consideration.

The agency's second venture into asserting its role came the day after the issuance of the disarmament report, and involved the signing of a $150,000 research contract with the Bendix Corporation. The sum is a small one as government contracts go; the Defense Department normally would not consider a $150,000 contract worthy of a two-sentence announcement, but the Bendix contract was the first awarded by the agency, and, in a way that suggested it was compensating for its past lack of publicity, it invited the press to a signing ceremony.

The job set forth in the contract, Foster explained, is the development of monitoring techniques that will permit effective inspection of arms production with a minimum of physical intrusion on Soviet territory.

Since the Soviets have equated inspection with espionage, the goal is to determine whether it is possible by checking a limited number of points in a nation's industrial establishment to determine compliance with an arms agreement.

Spokesman for Kennedy

The agency's third excursion into public view developed unexpectedly but illustrated the Administration's desire to upgrade the agency. The occasion was the appearance last week in the Washington *Post* of a letter signed by Foster, denying that Kennedy had introduced a "new element" into the nuclear inspection issue when he said at his press conference that the sudden resumption of testing by the Soviet Union created the need for "some assurance against a repetition of this summer's incident."

The letter was drafted at the White House following the appearance in the *Post* of an article which contended that Kennedy, in effect, had shifted his position from inspection for nuclear testing to inspection for test preparations; the latter might necessarily be the sort of detailed inspections to which the Russians have previously shown themselves adamantly opposed.

The denial, significantly, was carried over Foster's signature, although the White House could just as well have presented it in the name of any one of a number of officials.

A revealing test of the agency's strength will be held sometime during the next few months when its appropriation for the 1963 fiscal year comes up for consideration in Congress. The act establishing the agency provided for a $10 million budget, with no time limit set on the expenditure. The Administration is currently seeking an appropriation of $6.5 million, $4 million of which is intended for outside research; the remainder is slated for personnel expansion, something that has been limited so far because of the tiny appropriation with which the agency was started.

From the 80 positions that it inherited from its predecessor, the State Department Disarmament Administration, the agency has expanded to approximately 100; its ultimate goal is 220. Progress toward this goal has also been impeded by the stringent security requirements that Congress imposed on the agency. These call for security clearance standards "not less stringent" than those of agencies with the highest security restrictions. The effect of this requirement has been to make hiring a long and tedious process, since the clearance generally takes at least a few months and can run sometimes over 6 months. The applications are now coming out of the security review mill, and the agency—if it gets the money it is seeking—expects to fill out its staff by next summer.—D.S.G.

Conflicts of Interest: White House Issues Policy Statement on Use of Outside Consultants

The Administration last week set forth a policy to govern conflicts of interest among the many specialists who serve the government on a part-time basis.

The demand for an explicit policy has grown with the government's increasing use of outside consultants, many of whom, especially in science