

U.F.O.'s and All That ^{1/10/69}

Even before the University of Colorado report on Unidentified Flying Objects was released yesterday, word was out among the true believers that the document was a "whitewash." There was even a book already printed to contradict the work and conclusions of Prof. Edward U. Condon's investigations.

Evidently many committed to the belief that reported U.F.O. sightings prove this planet is being reconnoitered and even visited by beings from elsewhere in space will remain unpersuaded that earth has a current monopoly on space voyagers. The experience with the Warren Commission report on President Kennedy's assassination and the minor, if lucrative, industry that has arisen out of efforts to challenge those conclusions indicates what lies ahead for the Condon Report.

But outside the ranks of true believers, we suspect, this document and its conclusions will find wide acceptance. Professor Condon and his colleagues did make a careful and extensive investigation. They enlisted specialists in the relevant branches of science, interviewed alleged witnesses, examined photographs purporting to show U.F.O. sightings and studied cases of claimed radar detection.

Their conclusion is that the evidence at their command up to this time does not warrant any further serious preoccupation with the problem—except possibly by students of popular psychology. They freely acknowledge that contrary evidence may arise in the future, in which case they have no objection to a reopening of the subject.

The essence of the problem was probably best put some time ago by Prof. Gerard P. Kuiper. Attempting to show that some U.F.O.'s come from outer space, he said, "is more difficult than finding a needle in a haystack; it is finding a piece of extraterrestrial hay in a terrestrial haystack, often on the basis of reports of believers in extraterrestrial hay." Those believers will keep on trying, but the rest of society can dedicate themselves to worrying about more serious matters—unless and until there is new and more persuasive evidence than any now available.