

A QUESTION OF INTEGRITY

Charles Harvard Gibbs-Smith

The entire integrity of the Condon Report was shattered long before it was even written, when in 1966 the Low memorandum was composed. Whatever intrinsic merits the completed report might possess were ineradicably tainted in advance by what was revealed in the Low document. I have waited long and in vain for this to be publicly stated; now I feel I must state it myself.*

FOR the purposes of this article, I am not concerned whether UFOs are vehicles from outer space, hamburgers tossed from balloons, or spots in front of the eyes of neurotic tabby cats. I am concerned with the status and standing of a scientific report, the Condon Report "of the Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects", completed in 1968, and released to the Press in January 1969.

On August 9, 1966, a confidential memorandum was written by a Mr. Robert J. Low to officials of the University of Colorado, concerning the proposed contract between this University and the U.S. Air Force, for the former to conduct research into UFOs, and be paid for this project out of public funds to the tune of some half a million dollars. The project was to be under the direction of Dr. Edward U. Condon, with Mr. Low (a member of the University staff) as the project co-ordinator and "key operations man". The memorandum in question was written *before* the contract was signed between the University and the Air Force.

The Low memorandum was entitled "Some Thoughts, on the UFO Project", and included the following passages (my italics):

"... Our study would be conducted almost exclusively by non-believers who, though they couldn't possibly prove a negative result, could and probably would add an impressive body of evidence that there is no reality to the observations. *The trick would be, I think, to describe the project so that, to the public, it would appear a totally objective study but, to the scientific community, would present the image of a group of non-believers trying their best to be objective, but having an almost zero expectation of finding a saucer.* One way to do this would be to stress investigation, not of the physical phenomena, but rather of the people who do the observing—the psychology and sociology of persons and groups who report seeing UFOs. *If the emphasis were put here, rather than on examination of the old question of the physical reality of the saucer, I think the scientific community would quickly get the message.* ... I'm inclined to feel at this early stage that, if we set up the thing right and take pains to get the proper people involved and have success in presenting the image we want to present to the scientific community, we could carry the job off to our benefit. . . ."

This memorandum was accidentally discovered by a researcher late in 1967, and was revealed to the public in *Look* magazine in May of 1968.

Already, the project director, Dr. Condon, had indulged in statements and activities quite out of keeping with his official role as an impartial scientific investigator, let alone as a project head.

The publicising of the memorandum, and of Dr. Condon's activities, led to a bitter controversy, as a result of which Dr. Condon dismissed two of his colleagues on the committee.¹

The Low memorandum can only be viewed as a deliberate act calculated to deceive; to deceive first the scientific community, and, through them, the public at large. I know of no modern parallel to such a cynical act of duplicity on the part of a university official dedicated, presumably, to the pursuit of truth. By the writing of such a document, the integrity of the entire project was shattered in advance. Mr. Low's words disclose that everything in the report—unbeknown to the reader, be he scientist or layman—would ultimately play its part in presenting the angled case whereby the "scientific community would quickly get the message." This, in plain language, means that a deliberate perversion of the truth was planned *before* the contract with the Air Force was signed; which, in turn, points to an *agreement* with someone, or some body, as to what that "message" should be. Thus the spirit of perversion must inevitably have pervaded the whole fabric of the report; conditioned what was included, and what was excluded; what was played up, and what was played down; what was said in a particular manner, and what was not said; what was implied, and what was not implied. In short, it was doomed to be a "tainted" report from the start. By writing this memorandum, Mr. Low has brought disgrace upon himself, and disgrace upon the whole project and all those associated with it, and not least upon the University of Colorado.

The Low memorandum also conveys an implied contempt for the subject of the UFOs which the University was being handsomely paid to investigate; and contempt is not compatible with scientific investigation. It is universally accepted in civilised society that integrity of outlook and behaviour is as sacred where a scientist is investigating the effect of lipstick on sex-appeal, as it is where a cure is being sought for cancer. No one but a scoundrel would think otherwise.

What underlines the dishonesty which surrounds the whole project is the fact that *at no time has the Low*

* Mr. Gibbs-Smith is one of the world's foremost aviation historians and has written many books for the London Science Museum. He holds the degree of M.A. from his family university of Harvard (U.S.A.). He is also an Honorary Companion of the Royal Aeronautical Society
—EDITOR.

memorandum been repudiated, or even deplored, by any of the parties to the deal; nor—to its shame—by the American Academy of Sciences. Neither the University of Colorado nor the Air Force has had a word of explanation to offer for behaviour which cuts at the very roots of scientific integrity.

It is all too clear that the American Academy of Sciences felt that this case was not worth making any fuss about; otherwise it would have gone into action; and this is one of the most deplorable aspects of the whole case. The Academy should, of course, have immediately disowned Dr. Condon if it was not proved to its satisfaction that he knew nothing of the memorandum until it was published; and it should have issued a statement roundly condemning him for continuing with the project after he *did* know about the business.

As for the University of Colorado, its duty was plain as a pikestaff; it should have expelled Mr. Low and everyone who was associated with his memorandum, and it should have immediately cancelled the project, and handed back the money to the Air Force. The fact that it did none of these things; and made no public statement of any kind repudiating the memorandum—

and even allowed the project to continue as if nothing had happened—now marks it out as a discredited small-time college to which I hope no project of any seriousness will ever again be entrusted.

Let no one forget that we have not been discussing UFOs; we have been discussing scientific integrity. And I would remind the President of the University of Colorado—who contributed a pathetic and egregious little foreword to the Report—of how the word 'integrity' is defined by the best American dictionary. Integrity, says Webster, is "*such rectitude that one is incapable of being false to a trust, a responsibility, a pledge.*"

C.H.G-S.
London.
May 1970.

NOTE

¹One of the colleague dismissed by Dr. Condon was Dr. David Saunders who, in fact, was the "researcher" who discovered the existence of Mr. Low's memorandum.—EDITOR.

IS FLYING SAUCER REVIEW GOING MONTHLY..?

In effect YES..!

From September, 1970, we will publish both the regular bi-monthly FSR, and, on alternate months, between regular issues, a new journal devoted solely to presenting reports and investigations. The new publication will be known as

FLYING SAUCER REVIEW CASE HISTORIES SUPPLEMENT

and it is scheduled to appear six times a year, commencing with the issue for October, 1970.

The quality of printing of the new journal will be the same, and the layout similar to that of the regular FSR, so that it will be possible to bind the new journal together with the old.

The price of CASE HISTORIES SUPPLEMENT will be 4s. 0d. a copy, post paid.

The new journal will be devoted to the presentation of investigators' reports from home and overseas, readers' reports, world-wide news items in the style of World Round-up, special reports of major investigations or other interesting cases in the form of articles, historical cases, re-investigation of old cases, and so on.

This brave new venture will depend for success on the ready support of our readers. So it is up to you—all of you who want a monthly FSR—to play your part in establishing what could well be the nucleus of an FSR/reader/investigator network.

By subscription: £1 4s. 0d. (£1.20) per annum; overseas £1 6s. 0d. (£1.30) or \$3.40 per annum.

Remittances, payable to "Flying Saucer Review," to:

F.S.R. Case Histories, 49a Kings Grove, Peckham, London SE15

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

New increases in printing costs—with more envisaged by the end of the year—plus rises in the cost of stationery, and the threat of imminent and savage increases in postage, have forced upon us the necessity of revising the price of our regular bi-monthly FSR. It has been something of an achievement to have held steady our price of a single copy for more than four years, but inflationary pressures are such that as from September/October 1970 we will have to charge 6s. 0d. a copy.

From September 1970, therefore, the annual subscription to FLYING SAUCER REVIEW will be £1 16s. 0d. (£1.80) per annum. The overseas rate will be £1 18s. 0d. (£1.90), or \$5.00—bank exchange commission on dollar cheques is catered for in this latter amount—which includes postage by surface mail.