

Emilia

Memo to: Files

March 2, 1968

From: E. U. Condon

This memo puts down from memory the substance of a conference held on 18 September 1967 in my office, 1006 JILA, between David R. Saunders, Robert J. Low and myself.

The meeting was set up at the request of Saunders, who outlined what he wanted us to consider. His general position was that our UFO project report would, in his opinion, surely express the conclusion that we had found a high probability that the Earth is being visited by space-craft and beings from some extra-terrestrial (unknown) places. He took the position that this conclusion would be so remarkable that it would be extremely difficult to gain acceptance for it from Government officials, from the National Academy of Sciences, and from the public at large, if it were merely given to them without advance preparation.

Saunders therefore advocated that we depart from the policy that we have been following of not giving any advance indications of our possible or probable conclusions, so as to prepare public opinion in a planned way for acceptance of the extraordinary conclusion which he postulated would be our finding.

After considerable discussion, Low and I rejected emphatically his suggestions. This was done explicitly first on the basis of not accepting his idea that we would find for a ^{high} probability that the Earth is being visited by extra-terrestrial spacecraft. Secondly, that even if it were, we do not feel that it is within the scope of our task to try to mold government official opinion or public opinion, and thirdly, that even if our task could be interpreted as including an attempt to mold opinion, we do not feel competent to undertake to do so, and therefore would not do so for that reason.

I said that on the basis of working experience to date, I thought it extremely unlikely that we would get evidence pointing clearly toward the reality of extra-terrestrial visitors. I said also that if we ever did, I would attempt to communicate this knowledge directly to the White House through the channel of personal contacts with the Office of Science and Technology (Dr. Donald Hornig).

I had the impression that Saunders was quite dissatisfied with this decision but he did not show signs at the time of not going along with it. In the period subsequent to this conference he seemed to me to grow less and less cooperative, particularly in the way of being unwilling to keep me informed of the details of his work and of any results he might be getting. This applied even to the question of showing me the manuscript of a paper he wrote on Orthoteny which was regarded by him as a draft of a possible chapter in our final report. After some urging by Low, Saunders finally provided me with a copy dated 1/10/68, with a cover note saying he was sending it to me because "of your reputed interest." Low and I felt

after reading this draft that it was statistically unsound, i.e., that its statistical argument did not genuinely support the conclusions which he claimed to reach. So Low arranged for Dr. Paul R. Julian of NCAR to act as consultant to give us the benefit of his criticisms as a mathematical statistician. Julian is at present on leave at the University of Chicago but studied the Saunders' draft and came to Boulder and spent a good part of January 19 in conference with Saunders, Low and myself in criticism of Saunders' orthoteny draft. Julian later (29 January 1968) put his critical comments in the form of a memorandum which is part of the project files.

I have the impression that Saunders was impressed by Julian's criticisms but I am not really sure of his attitude because of his taciturnity, and because I have the impression that he knows very little about mathematical statistics, and so is not really capable of judging for himself about the force of Julian's criticisms.

Looking back on the conference of September 18, I feel that this represented more than merely a desire to put over his opinion-molding suggestion, but that it was a (successful) attempt on his part to get me to declare a position on my estimate of the likelihood of there being extra-terrestrial space craft, so that he could communicate this to McDonald and others.

Before we became aware of his treachery, we did not keep exact records of all meetings, but on at least two or three occasions, Low and I consulted Stuart Cook about our feeling that Saunders was working toward a prejudiced conclusion in favor of extra-terrestrial space craft. Cook assured us that he thought Saunders could be relied upon to deal with the evidence in an honest scientific way. On that basis we waited until we had evidence to the contrary.

Signed,



E. U. Condon

EUC:kes

cc - Dean Manning
- Bob Low