

# Debunkers say 'bunk' to UFOs, ESP

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Professionals in psychology, astronomy and magic gathered Friday to debunk paranormal phenomena — from ESP to UFOs — and said many young people still believe in ghosts, the Loch Ness monster and astrology.

"There has been an increase in the level of belief in the paranormal," lamented Paul Kurtz, chairman of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.

"The United States is the most highly advanced scientific and technological nation," he said. "It's paradoxical that in spite of this, large sectors of the population persist in mythological and primitive thought."

The 8-year-old committee is holding a national conference on the "scientific facts and fictions" of beliefs ranging from psychic warfare between the United States and the Soviet Union and the responsibility of the news media to investigate claims of the supernatural.

Speaking to reporters in advance of the two-day conference.

committee representatives announced they will send letters to 1,800 newspapers in the United States and Canada requesting the use of a disclaimer with astrological columns.

The disclaimers would describe the columns as entertainment and state, "Such predictions have no reliable basis in scientific fact."

"Astrology is not based upon any demonstrable evidence," said Kurtz. "Scientists have examined the claims of horoscopes and forecasts and there is no basis in astronomy or in psychology."

He cited a Gallup Poll showing that of 506 teen-agers, 13 to 18, surveyed earlier this year in the

United States, 55 percent believe in astrology. Fifty-nine percent said they believe in ESP, or extra-sensory perception; and 69 percent believe in angels.

The survey showed 20 percent believe in ghosts, and 18 percent of the teen-agers questioned said they believe in the Loch Ness monster.

