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Flying saucers —now top scientists seem convinced

FLYING saucers are about to become respectable. After years of orthodox scientific scorn, NASA, the American space agency, may soon co-operate in a major investigation into the phenomenon of unidentified flying objects.

The movement inside NASA to place the rich resources of the agency behind such a study is partly heretical, wholly anonymous and aware that most established physicists would still rather endorse the practice of table-tapping than admit a serious interest in the existence of strange machines in the sky.

But an impressive nucleus of respected scientific talent is now prodding NASA into action. This group is led by Dr. J. Allen Hynek, an astrophysicist from North Western University, near Chicago, and its official con-

sultant to the U.S. air force on UFOs.

For almost two decades, Dr. Hynek was a leading member of the special scientific establishment, inclined to dismiss the UFO phenomenon as a product of a gaudy and undisciplined public imagination.

Today he is so impressed with the enormous collection of testimony from reliable witnesses that he has begun to organize an international association of responsible scientists to assemble and analyse evidence on flying saucers from all over the world.

Limited

"I've called this group the Invisible College," Dr. Hynek told me. "It's very much like the early days of the Royal Society in England, when it was not too savoury to admit an interest in science."

Membership of the Invisible College is limited to those educated at least up to the degree of doctor of philosophy, and a number of prominent

British astronomers and physicists, all too shy to reveal their names for publication, have been admitted.

Backed by this multilingual cluster of talent and openly supported by Dr. James McDonald of the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, Hynek wants action on a national scale now—rather than wait 15 months for the results of an investigation into UFOs now being conducted at the University of Colorado.

Secret

And the action that he most urgently wants is for NASA to use its superlative spacetrack network to monitor and document the entry of mysterious objects into the earth's atmosphere.

Up to now, everything that flashed on to the spacetrack screens has been classified top secret, unavailable even to serious scientists. But on occasions this secrecy has been breached.

In April, 1964, two indiscreet radar technicians at Cape Kennedy leaked the story of how they saw four UFOs in pursuit of an unmanned Gemini space capsule.

And in January 1961 it was reliably reported that the Cape's automatic tracking gear locked on to a mysterious object which was apparently following a Polaris missile over the South Atlantic. In June 1965 astronaut Ed White spotted and photographed an alien, egg-shaped intruder with protruding arms. It has never been identified.

Hynek is convinced that NASA is sitting on a number of similar sightings, and that if its screens could be made available to independent scientists, the findings might be sensational.

Now NASA seems to be moving Hynek's way. "Two years ago, most of us regarded UFOs as a branch of witchcraft, one of the foibles of modern man," a NASA scientist told me. "But so many reputable people have expressed interest in confidence to NASA that I would not be in the least surprised to see the space agency begin work on a UFO study contract within the next 12 months."