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CAUS Renews Anti-UFO Secrecy Effort During National Freedom of UFO Information Week

At a press conference in Washington, D. C., on Oct. 27, 1981, CAUS legal advisor Peter A. Gersten announced the following initiatives to compel full accountability of the Federal Government's UFO policymakers in their suppression of official UFO documentation:

● Establishment of National Freedom of UFO Information Week (Oct. 25 - 31). Using the press conference as the week's kick-off, Gersten described plans to revive CAUS as an international public-interest group dedicated to reforming official policies and practices on the public availability of UFO-related records. Part of those plans includes a special fund-raiser to solicit at least one dollar from the millions of citizens who have sighted UFOs during the past three decades. The money collected, said Gersten, would be applied toward the costly program of using the U. S. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as the primary tool to gain access to official UFO documentation. Costly, mainly because of the litigation that inevitably ensues from the lack of government cooperation in fulfilling FOIA requests.

● Hearing of oral arguments, on Oct. 28, in the plaintiff's appeal of CAUS Vs. U. S. National Security Agency (NSA). This landmark FOIA lawsuit to free up some 135 UFO documents maintained by the Agency at its headquarters at Fort George G. Meade, Md., has resulted in worldwide news-media interest. Despite acknowledging that interest, the U. S. Federal District Court judge sided with the Agency without even inspecting for himself the documents in question. CAUS argues that the judge erred in that nonaction, that the "special circumstances" of the UFO controversy as a public issue requires the Court to go the distance on behalf of the public's right to know. Financing of this appeals litigation has been supported in part by the Washington, D.C.-based Fund for UFO Research, Inc., which also contributed toward funding of the CAUS-led appeal in the celebrated case of Ground Saucer Watch, Inc., Vs. U. S. Central Intelligence Agency (1978 - 81).

● Drafting of a "Presidential Proclamation to Affirm Freedom of UFO Information and Expression." Purpose of the proclamation is to provide would-be "tellers-all" a

waiver of their secrecy oaths and to have all suppressed official UFO-related records made available to the public -- in the present and in the future. Copies of the draft have been circulated within the privately funded UFO research community, been distributed in response to inquiries from the public, and been made available to news media (a copy having been published in the Oct. 10, 1981, edition of The News World, a daily newspaper in New York City). Right now, the draft is in the hands of two Congressional bodies -- the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee.

THE PULSE OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Though a relatively small number of journalists turned out to cover Gersten's press conference, they did seem engrossed in what he had to say. The thrust of his presentation was that no longer can the Federal Government ignore its responsibility to (1) level with the public on the contents of official UFO documentation and to (2) bring its worldwide resources to bear upon revealing what he calls the "ultimate secret": what are the so-called unidentified flying objects?

Gersten tied this twofold obligation to the inherent weakness of the government's position on official UFO research, as evidenced by the failure of Defense agencies to cope with the now-famous series of UFO fly-overs at some sensitive U. S. military installations in the Northeast back in 1975. With a geography-chronology "backgrounder" presented by colleague Bruce S. Maccabee, Gersten proceeded to let the 1975 "flap" evidence speak for itself -- adding to it a surprise witness, as it were, in the person of a former Air Force sergeant, who countered the AF contention that the UFO sightings at Loring AFB, Maine, could be attributed to nothing more than "unknown helicopter" activity. The government's "bee-sting" (or "isolated-incident," in USAF parlance) approach to formal investigation of UFO encounters should not -- indeed, cannot -- be tolerated by the American citizenry, said Gersten. The nation's security is at stake, he averred -- so much so that individual citizens (like the UFO-victimized Betty Cash of Dayton, Texas) are fast losing confidence in the ability of government authorities to come to grips with the UFO problem.

Noting that the initial documentation on the 1975 crisis came to light via a "leak," Gersten implied that more such leaks would be welcomed -- especially if that's what it takes to expose any malfeasance/nonfeasance/misfeasance on the part of the Government's UFO policymakers. In this connection, he said, he would provide free legal assistance to any present or former military person who because of having come forward with the necessary "hard evidence" of UFO reality incurs persecution or prosecution at the hands of government authorities.

Upon ending the press conference with a question-and-answer session, Gersten announced plans to sue the Air Force for a full accounting of its 1975-crisis documentation.

Implicit in his remarks that Tuesday morning was a challenge to the nation's news media to cease treating UFOs as merely a subject for entertainment -- light entertainment, at that. The message apparently took hold, for on Nov. 3, 1981, the Washington Post carried an article by Ward Sinclair, entitled "Suit Seeks to Lift Secrecy Veil From Agency's UFO Documents." On the strength of that article's being reprinted in a number of other newspapers across the nation, Gersten has been flooded with requests for interviews and for appearances on radio talk shows.

UPDATE ON THE NSA CASE

The short hearing on Oct. 28th in the U. S. Court House in Washington, D. C., left nobody surprised. The two old Men (and one not-so-old woman) in Black probably had their minds made up months ago. Even so, this classic "David and Goliath" confrontation put the government on notice: It's going to have to continue dealing with citizens' demands for greater public access to official UFO-related records -- particularly so long as UFOs continue to manifest themselves at will and with seeming impunity. Despite Gersten's assurance that the NSA UFO data ought to be readily segregable from any sources/methods documentation, the three-judge panel ruled in favor of the Agency, issuing its decision on Nov. 3, 1981. Depending on the availability and priority of funds, CAUS will pursue an appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court. This, of course, would be the first time for the nation's top judicial body to review an FOIA case involving UFO-related records. And it would entail the filing of "friend of the court" briefs by interested parties, a practice that literally would afford the UFO issue its long-awaited, full day in court. Presumably, between now and then, former NSA members (and/or other Federal employees) privy to inside information will come forward with relevant sworn testimony to support these briefs. Here's a chance, as well, for the various private UFO research organizations to go on record with their own briefs in the issue.

A RENEWED COMMITMENT

In redoubling its efforts as a "task force" for furthering freedom of UFO information, CAUS is embarking on a nationwide fund drive. But money is not all that's needed, says CAUS Assistant Director Larry Fawcett. Establishing a worldwide network of volunteer "UFO information coordinators" would speed up the group's work.

"Our Board of Advisors can't do it all," he said. "The coordinators would work out of their own homes and offices -- much as does researcher Leonard Stringfield -- to gather and relay material, follow up on local news items, initiate pertinent FOIA requests, conduct 'investigative reporting,' press for Congressional action on the UFO problem, obtain written testimony of persons who want to clear their conscience about their participation in any official 'UFO coverup,' and take on special projects like contributing articles to our bulletin UFOFORMANT."

"Ours is truly a public service operation, but we can produce no more than what the public will help us produce. The more we receive volunteer help -- in monies and in mechanisms -- the more effective we'll be. It's as simple as that," he concluded.

Persons interested in "joining ⁱⁿ the CAUS" as UFO information coordinators and/or as contributing sponsors are asked to contact Fawcett at 471 Goose Lane, Coventry, CT 06238.

WASHINGTON COMMENTARY (From the Director, CAUS Washington, D. C. Bureau)

The Fate of Freedom of UFO Information

By

Larry W. Bryant

Do you as a U. S. citizen think you have the "right to know" what your government is (and is not) doing about the growing controversy over the origin and purpose of unidentified flying objects? If so, do you think the people in charge of official UFO research have adequately discharged their responsibility to honor that right to know?

Those are key questions to us UFO-oriented citizens who now are faced with the grim prospect that in the next few years the right-to-know gains achieved through our previous use of the U. S. Freedom of Information Act will be offset by the current political move to whittle down, if not repeal, the Act's power. Ironically, at the forefront of this movement is an ostensible pro-UFO senator -- Barry Goldwater (chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee).

In his typical macho lingo, the Republican from Arizona has declared, "I think we ought to do away with the whole damn thing!" Perhaps the senator is unaware of the mass of historically valuable material that the Act has brought to light: hundreds of UFO-related documents heretofore confined to the darkest corners of such agencies as the military intelligence community (Army/Navy/Air Force/Coast Guard/Defense Intelligence Agency), the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Agency, etc. Perhaps, on the other hand, he's fully aware of that exposure but as a realist cannot expect that the Act will free up any hard-core data that will resolve the controversy once for all (e.g., an official revelation that the government does indeed possess bonafide UFO hardware/crew). By implication, such data would be classified in the (supposed) interests of national security; and Goldwater's pronouncements on that issue are legend. So at first glance to him, at least, any attempt to use the Act to dig up still more valuable UFO evidence would be futile.

If you feel that Goldwater and his colleagues should be taking more than a glance at the implications of no longer having the Act to apply to UFO research, I suggest that you urge your congressmen not only to resist weakening of the Act's provisions but also to work toward strengthening them. In your communication you might point out that without the past success of the Act the "Cosmic Watergate" known as official UFO research would be thriving today unchallenged -- and hence indirectly would be threatening the credibility of governmental institutions in other public matters as well.

Can our government as the Free World's paragon of open information and accountability afford any present or future erosion of our right to know?

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FUTURE FOCUS (A Periodic Report on the CAUS Agenda)

Not just the Federal Government has a Freedom of Information Act. Some of the states -- e.g., Virginia -- have passed similar legislation to afford their citizens a window by which to inspect government operations large and small. Presumably, this would include state-run investigations into reported UFO encounters. Indeed, every state police system probably has a Standing Operating Procedure by which to investigate UFO-related incidents ranging from simple nighttime sightings to "close encounters of the third kind." What happens to the records of these investigations is no less important than what happens to such records at the Federal level. Therefore, CAUS asks all its UFO Information Coordinators to check into the prospect of their states' having freedom-of-information access to official UFO documentation.