

"Flying Saucer" Sky Phenomenon Caused By Planet ?

SYDNEY: Captain Gordon Savage, the pilot who reported a "flying saucer" near Canberra yesterday morning, said last night that he first thought it might be a Russian plane, but he is convinced now that the red and white alternating lights he saw were a phenomenon caused by the planet Venus rising on the horizon.

Captain Savage and First Officer F. E. Hastilow were flying a DC3 freighter from Brisbane to Melbourne, and near Canberra were turning back to Sydney because Essendon was temporarily closed, when they saw lights to the east at 3.25 a.m.

In an official report to his company First Officer Hastilow said the white light alternated at 15 seconds interval to a red light. They were flying at 3000ft., and the lights were above them, appearing some distance away and moving in the same northerly direction at considerably faster speed.

Captain Savage climbed to 5000 ft to get a better look. The object drew away and eventually disappeared, but when the freighter's navigation lights were turned off strange lights ahead reappeared.

Replying to a radio query from the freighter Mascot control tower said no other plane was in the vicinity. Later Mascot tower picked up an unusual light in the east.

Asked last night why he had turned off his navigation lights, Captain Savage said: "At that

Captain Savage said: "At that time I was quite convinced it was some foreign object in the sky. I thought it might be some other aircraft that did not want me to see him. I immediately thought of a Russian plane that might be having a look round our coastline. I turned towards it and tried to chase it, but it disappeared."

Captain Savage said he ruled out his first belief that the lights came from a planet because he could see no other stars, and believed the night to be cloudless. He later learned there was high cirrus cloud hiding the other stars, while Venus rose from the horizon. "With a glare of light on the black background it was impossible to tell the distance. I could only compare it with aircraft navigation lights."

Captain Savage said that he was sure for about two hours after he landed that he had seen "some foreign object." He was now quite satisfied that it was the planet Venus.

He had reported the object as a "flying saucer" for want of a better term. He did not believe in flying saucers.

First Officer M. Porteous, ANA pilot, said last night that he had logged a similar phenomenon about 5 am on March 13 while flying between Ceduna and Adelaide, on the Perth-Adelaide run.

There was a fantastic display of light green and red alternating lights until the planet rose about 15 degrees above the horizon and the lights disappeared. It had been established as the planet Venus.

The navigator was "star shooting" at the time, and the planet was plotted.

No report on yesterday's mystery has been made to the Department of Civil Aviation. The department's Acting Superintendent of Accident Studies (Mr W. L. Milne) said: "The last time I saw a 'flying saucer' I was on my way home from an RAAF mess."

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