

INCONCLUSIVE CASE FOR U.F.O.

UFOs OVER THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE. By Michael Hervev. Robert Hale. 250 pp. \$10.50. Reviewer:

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JUST as men long gazed at the birds and wondered why it was that man, the greatest and most intelligent of all the creatures, could not free himself of his earth-bound environment other men looked out beyond the moon and pondered the possibility that somewhere out there in all that darkness there just might be another being as intelligent as himself.

The sky, of course, is no longer for the birds although curiously enough the latest dimension in aviation, the hang glider, is the closest man has yet come to the real thing and it post-dated the various inventions of flight per se.

Not quite so well achieved is that other great dream that man might one day quite firmly establish that there are other beings out there and that it is not in-

out there and that it is not inconceivable that they have a beady eye on what to us is the ideal habitat.

There are many thousands who claim to have seen "something" which they attribute as being probably of extra-terrestrial origin. There are as many of course, who disbelieve because they, like me, have never seen one of "them".

Mr Hervey has collected together a great deal of information which will convince those who want to believe, leave unperturbed those determined not to believe until they have seen for themselves, and quite probably not convince or unconvince

the rest, depending on their approach.

But let us take one of Mr Hervey's cases as an example. He reports, quite accurately, that on July 15, 1965, a number of people at Canberra airport, including the airport manager, Mr Arthur Lindeman and two TAA pilots, reported seeing an object north-east of the airport.

Unfortunately he reports also that the RAAF sent an aircraft out to try to identify the object "but it disappeared before it could reach it". The RAAF did not send an aeroplane.

And he does not report that within a few days of the sighting the mysterious object was ascertained to have been in all probability a metallic observation balloon of a new type which had

balloon of a new type which had earlier been released at Wagga.

Mr Hervey's book is studded with just such incidents, although whether as firmly based as the Canberra report would take many months to establish.

Over the years the RAAF, through the office of the Director of Air Force Intelligence, has kept quite detailed records of UFO sightings reported to it. Between January, 1960, and December, 1973, it received 815 such reports.

RAAF investigations put down 90 per cent of the sightings to aircraft, space debris, weather balloons, stars, planets or similar. Seven per cent of the reports contained insufficient information for proper evaluation, leaving 3 per cent not readily explicable.

The United Kingdom Air

Ministry, which has the responsibility over British air space, attributes 90 per cent of its sightings to explicable causes and the other 10 per cent it says it cannot explain because of insufficient information.

USAF records show 80 per cent attributable to known phenomena or hoaxes, 17 per cent unattributable because of insufficient information, leaving a residue of three per cent.

The RAAF is a bit more helpful with its information, relying on US and Soviet space exploration for the probability that life on any other planet in our solar system is not possible and that therefore the only other source of intelligence must lie beyond

it.

The RAAF points out that the nearest visible star to Earth lies some 25 million miles away and that travel to Earth from it at the best speeds known to Man (about 25,000 mph) would still require a journey time of about 115,000 years.

"Consequently, the probability of extra-terrestrial life forms visiting Earth is extremely remote", the RAAF claims.

Yet there remains the fact that the people on whose evidence Mr Hervey relies have seen something, including the farmer on Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, who reported in May, 1972, that his entire bean crop disappeared after a UFO had hovered over the field.

Unfortunately, Mr Hervey has not advanced the argument much further than the stage it had already reached and the manner of his presentation will not persuade other than the dedicated believer to wade through it. One of the illustrations, that of the so-called "saucer pads" in Queensland is interesting, but most of the other illustrations have often been seen before in one form or another.