



UFO specialist Dr J. Allen Hynek.

THOMAS MELBOURNE HERALD 3/1/79

# UFO probe draws blank

WELLINGTON, Tues., AAP. — UFO fever is still sweeping NZ, despite an abortive investigation by an Air Force Orion early today.

Civil airmen and a cameraman who filmed UFOs between the North and South Islands on Sunday are indignantly denying suggestions that what they saw was Venus, Jupiter or some other explainable phenomenon.

The area where the UFOs were sighted and picked up on radar screens is a main air and sea route between Wellington and Lyttleton, and is also fished by NZ and foreign fishing vessels.

The Orion, normally used for anti-submarine and fishing surveillance, has a crew of 12 and a host of electronic and photographic devices aboard.

But its abortive mission has not silenced the believers.

The superintendent of the Mt. John Observatory, Mr David Mabin, who yesterday was 99 per cent sure the UFOs were Venus, changed his view after seeing a televised film of the objects and said he thought it was Jupiter under poor viewing conditions.

Mr David Crockett, who filmed the UFOs, was indignant at the suggestion that it was a planet.

He declared: "It's easy for people to talk like that if they were not there Venus through the lens was nowhere that size".

"There is no way it could be Venus," declared Mr Crockett, who is planning a documentary film on the episode.

"Venus does not go up and down and sideways."

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said yesterday that it did not regard the sightings as posing a threat to the country but thought them interesting enough to warrant investigation.

A weather expert offered a further explanation. The senior lecturer in meteorology at Victoria University of Wellington, Mr Jack Hutchings, discounted the Venus theory and suggested that patches of warm air which sometimes moved from west to east across

the South Island could give radar echoes.

"The patches of warm dry air might glow but they would not have a very bright light.

"It is possible that a bright light from some fishing vessel was reflected up into a layer of air and then along the layer rather like a mirage," said Mr Hutchings.

Herald man HUGH SCHMITT reports from New York that America's foremost authority on UFOs and extraterrestrial activity, Dr J. Allen Hynek, is not sceptical about the reports.

But he wants to know more about them.

Dr Hynek, who was technical adviser for the space epic film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind", said: "I'm extremely interested in the phenomena."

Speaking from his home in Evanston, Illinois, Dr Hynek said the weekend sightings could provide a vehicle for some "Honest-to-God" research into UFOs.

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