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To All Plasmarians:

A brief report on the upcoming AAAS symposium on UFOs to be held Dec. 26-27 in Boston.

Despite the fact that one of the four arrangers of the symposium, Dr. Carl Sagan of Cornell, says one of his objectives is "to confront unscientific claims and methods," and another sponsor, Dr. Walter Orr Roberts of the University Corp. for Atmospheric Research, complains that "It has been difficult to get people on the 'critic' (anti-extraterrestrial) side to speak," no one thought to consider inviting me. 

It was not an accidental oversight. Rather, I strongly suspect, a disguised effort to present a heavily ETI loaded viewpoint while trying to give the impression of what Roberts calls a "balanced" symposium.

Hynek, McDonald and Dr. Robert Hall (brother of Dick Hall of NICAP) will speak for the ETI viewpoint, with strong support from Sagan and Dr. Thornton Page, another one of the four panel arrangers. (In fact, three of the four arrangers of the program will appear as featured speakers as well as session chairmen.) Only poor, old, aging Dr. Menzel will be there to try to counter their arguments. Dr. Robert Baker, another one of the Roush symposium scientists, and a semi-believer, also will appear.

Even Walter Sullivan of the NY Times will be a panelist. (His only claim to expertise on UFOs so far as I know is the introduction he wrote for the Condon Report--plus the several stories he wrote suggesting that the "signals" received from Pulsars might be signals from distant civilizations (despite the fact that the evidence at the time he wrote suggested otherwise and Pulsars have now been almost certainly identified as neutron stars or similar.)

In addition there are a group of neutral scientists, like Hardy, a radar expert from USAF Labs, who knows nothing about UFOs and will be snowed under. Plus other scientists whose views I don't know. But only aging Menzel will be there to try to answer the distortions and falsehoods of McDonald and Hynek.

I talked with Roberts by phone Sunday and he did not recall my name having even been mentioned. After our discussion he said he sure wished that I had been invited--but obviously the program is now already set. I think that Sagan and Page are the two conspirators on the arrangements panel and I think Roberts pretty much left things in their hands. He respects them as astronomers and says of Hynek and McDonald that they are "men willing to look objectively at evidence." HAH, Roberts should only know!

Last year, Sagan and Page tried to hold a UFO symposium at the AAAS meeting in Dallas, even before the Condon report was out...but agreed to defer until this year to allow report to be published before an AAAS discussion.

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At the Roush symposium in July, 1968, Sagan informally asked me if I would appear at the Dallas symposium. He offered me "5-10 minutes" compared to nearly an hour to be given to McDonald and Hynek. I said this hardly seemed fair and I was not interested on this basis. Subsequently, Page wrote to offer me all of "10-12 minutes." I turned this down (by which time the Dallas meeting had been cancelled) but said that if I could be given equal time in Boston, I would be interested.

Several months ago I wrote letters both to Page and Sagan, asking about the Boston meeting and their panel. Neither man has replied.

The unbalanced symposium that I am sure will result, which will seem to give AAAS endorsement to UFOs at a time when the myth is in sharp eclipse, will, I predict, rebound on Sagan and Page, and perhaps will open Roberts naive eyes.

Meanwhile, I am invited to speak at the University of Maryland on Dec. 18 and have chosen as my subject: "UFOs, N-Rays and Pathological Science." (In case you are not familiar with N-rays, these were the imaginary rays which French scientists thought they had discovered at the turn of the century and ~~for~~ which the French Academy awarded the Lalande prize and gold medal--only to have the whole thing exposed as self-delusion a few months later by an American born scientist, a Dr. Wood.)

In my paper, I take on a case-by-case study of the work of Hynek and McDonald, to show how time after time after time they have been taken in by hoaxers, how they simply have no ability to tell fact from fantasy. I consider it certainly my most devastating attack on the unscientific UFO efforts of these two misguided scientists.)

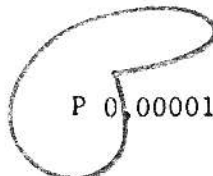
I plan to attend the AAAS symposium as a member of the audience--and might just take along a couple hundred copies of my University of Maryland paper for casual distribution after Hynek and McDonald have spoken.

Rest assured that you will get copies, a few extras for distribution if you are interested.

The bias and lack of balance are especially interesting for a symposium sponsored by the respected AAAS. Recall how the "believers" always complain that it is they who are discriminated against by the press, et al.

If I sound a little bitter, I am. But this too shall pass. If Menzel had not allowed himself to be talked into participating by Roberts, so that there were no "anti-ETIs" represented, I would not feel so badly--then it would be clearly a stacked deck. But Menzel's presence helps give the illusion of a fair deal.

Regards,



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