

House of Lords

Wednesday, 7th April, 1982.

The House met at eleven of the clock (*Prayers having been read earlier at the Judicial Sitting by the Lord Bishop of Portsmouth*): The LORD CHANCELLOR on the Woolsack.

UFO Sighting Reports: Security

The Earl of Cork and Orrery: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many of the 2,250 sightings of UFOs reported to the Ministry of Defence in the years 1978-81 were, and still are, classified for reasons of security.

Viscount Long: None, my Lords.

The Earl of Cork and Orrery: My Lords, I thank my noble kinsman for that Answer. May I ask him two questions? First, what did he mean when he said in his Answer on, I think, 4th March that reports of sightings that were considered to be of interest to defence were in fact classified? Secondly, what procedures may be open to individuals or organisations who would like to see the reports?

Viscount Long: My Lords, with regard to the latter part of my noble friend's supplementary question, there is no reason why he should not come and see the reports. Not many of them come in because not many people actually report sightings. There is no cover up in that respect. As for the first part of my noble friend's supplementary question, I stick to what I said earlier.

The Earl of Kimberley: My Lords, can my noble friend say why, when I previously asked a supplementary question, he said that the figures had got lost on the way to the Ministry, whereas today he says that they are there and available for anyone to see? Can he therefore place them in the Library for all of us to see?

Viscount Long: My Lords, I will look into that and find out whether it is possible for your Lordships to see them. I should like all of your Lordships to see them in the Library, if possible.

Lord Strabolgi: My Lords, may I ask the Government whether they think that any of these UFOs are manned spacecraft coming from a planet outside the solar system, as is believed by the "ufologists"?

Viscount Long: My Lords, the noble Lord can believe that; anything is possible.

Lord Shinwell: My Lords, do I understand that the noble Viscount the Minister in his reply to the original Question does not deny that UFOs exist? Is it possible—I use the word "possible" very carefully, but

deliberately—that all the information is well-known to the Ministry of Defence, but that for diplomatic and other reasons it is not prepared to make an announcement?

Viscount Long: No, my Lords, it is not prepared to make an announcement because it has not got the facts to make an announcement with authority behind it.

Lord Beswick: My Lords, the Question asks about 2,250 sightings. The noble Viscount says that there are very few sightings reported to the Ministry of Defence. Does that mean to say that the figure in the Question is incorrect?

Viscount Long: No, my Lords, it was on the original assumption that there are probably many sightings that are not reported to the Ministry of Defence. That is what I was really referring to. Therefore, at this stage what we have said is that we have got.

Lord Beswick: My Lords, I should like to clear up that point. The Question refers to 2,250 sightings "reported" to the Ministry of Defence. The Question I was asked was, "Is that figure correct, or not?"

Viscount Long: That is correct, my Lords, up to this moment.

Lord Wade: My Lords, may I ask which Ministry is responsible for UFOs?

Viscount Long: None, my Lords. Reports come into the Ministry of Defence, and anyone can take them from there.

Viscount St. Davids: My Lords, has anybody yet found an empty beer can marked, "Made in Centaurus", or any similar object? Until they have, will the Ministry deal with these matters with very considerable scepticism, please?

Viscount Long: My Lords, I am not the Minister for conservation, if it is a question of beer cans.

Lord Morris: My Lords, if something is said to be unidentified, how can it possibly be said to exist?

Viscount Long: A very good question, my Lords.

Lord Leatherland: My Lords, can the Minister tell us whether any of the unidentified flying objects are Ministers who are fleeing from the Cabinet just now?

Viscount Long: No, my Lords.

The Earl of Clancarty: My Lords, may I ask the noble Viscount whether he is aware of a Ministry of Defence document concerning UFOs, which was published in the July 1978 issue of a journal called *Viewpoint Aquarius*? Furthermore, he is aware that under the heading of "Contacts" there were listed 18 names, and alongside each name there was given the town which was the location of the supposed occurrence? There were also given classifications and a date and time relating to each name. Is the noble Viscount aware that there was a