

# Aero R&D to be Probed

The quality of aeronautical research and development in the United States will be examined by the Senate Aeronautical and Space Committee in a series of hearings shortly after Congress reconvenes January 10.

The Senators hope to learn whether current R&D efforts in the field are enough to meet the national need; if policy planning machinery as it now exists is adequate to properly relate the government and private sectors; and what Congress, the Executive, and private industry might do to make sure national aeronautical goals are met.

The relationship between various agencies and industry will also be examined. "In short," a committee staffer put it, "are we doing well enough now, or should we change?"

Historically, it has been the job of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to discover innovations, and bring them to the attention of the Department of Defense and private industry which would develop them.

That program has been changed in the case of the supersonic transport, which will be developed under the aegis of the Federal Aviation Agency. "We're looking beyond the SST," the spokesman said, "trying to find out just what kind of organization would best do the job."

Chairman Clinton P. Anderson (D-N. Mex.), points out that the aviation industry contributes heavily to both the gross national product and to the trade balance—with more than one billion

dollars in favorable trade in 1964. "Hardly any industry is more dependent on a sizable and sustained R&D effort to maintain a competitive edge," he adds.

The committee, when it meets in the last week of January for the R&D hearings, will be basically unchanged from that of the last session. Five members were up for re-election; all won. There is a chance, in view of overall Republican gains, that the proportion of Democrats and Republicans in the group may change slightly. If so, the change would affect none of the most important members from either side of the aisle.

About the first week in March, the committee will turn to consideration of the NASA budget.

## Nature Note

### Indian Butter Tree

The Indian butter tree, or mohwa, is a valuable forest tree of India, bearing unusual flowers and fruits that are nutritious sources of food.

The flower has rich creamy white

petals, joined into a shape like a small bird's egg about three-fourths inch long. It is surrounded by a purplish or plum-colored calyx at the end of two-inch green or pink stalks. Yellow anthers bearing pollen protrude through small holes at the top of the petals. These musty-smelling flowers bloom only at night, each one lasting only one night. At dawn they drop to the ground, where country people have been camping around the tree waiting to gather them.

The flowers are dried on the hard earth, and have a pleasant taste, much like pressed figs. People often mix them with other food, or make them into puddings or candies. Sugar can be extracted from them, and they can be fermented and distilled into an extremely strong drink.

The fruits are fleshy green berries which contain from one to four shiny yellow-brown seeds, highly valued as food in India. The fruits develop a few months after the flowers. The outer coat is eaten as a vegetable, and the inner one is dried and ground into flour. A thick oil can be pressed from the kernels, whose yellow color gave the tree its name of butter tree. This oil is used for cooking or making soap and candles.

The tree, *Madhuca latifolia* of the Sapotaceae family, is a large tree with

wrinkled thick gray bark, and grows abundantly on the dry rocky hill regions of central India. Most of the leaves fall during the season of flowering, the months of February to April. While the tree is still bearing flowers, new leaves sprout, at first rust-colored and crimson, then later turning dark green.

The butter tree, an important source of food, is seldom cut for timber.

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