

ASTRONOMY

No Visitors From Space

Chances that extra-terrestrial beings have anything to do with "flying saucers" are virtually zero, noted astronomer tells star-gazers' convention.

► WHILE IT is possible that intelligent beings do exist on earth-like planets in other solar systems, the chances that such beings would have anything to do with the "flying saucer" phenomena are virtually zero.

In fact, there is no reason to believe that "flying saucer" phenomena are extra-terrestrial. These are opinions expressed at the convention of the Western Amateur Astronomers in Berkeley, Calif., by Dr. Otto Struve, astronomer at the University of California.

The astronomer said that the "green fireball" type of objects undoubtedly are ordinary meteorites.

As for the shining objects, or lights, Dr. Struve said these must be attributed to some ordinary physical phenomena, either produced artificially by man or explicable in terms of ordinary laws of physics. One possible explanation, proposed by Prof. D. H. Menzel of Harvard is temperature inversion in the case of ordinary visible light.

Dr. Struve discounted the idea that the "flying saucers" may be directed by an intelligence that somehow surpasses the intelligence of man and, moreover, is capable of violating some of the fundamental rules of science and mechanics.

He pointed out that evidence is very strong that no planet in the solar system besides the earth is capable of supporting intelligent life. Lichens, a primitive form of life, might exist on Mars; it is improbable that higher forms exist.

If we go beyond the solar system, Dr. Struve said, we may find earth-like planets in other star systems within the galaxy. From a statistical knowledge of the universe, the scientist said that roughly 1,000 planets may exist in the depths of space which could support life. These planets would be, like the earth, satellites of stars similar to our sun.

Even so, the vast distances in the universe and the laws of science rule against any possibility that there might be communication between the earth and these hypothetical intelligent beings.

The average distance of a star, for example, is about 50,000 light years (one light year is nearly 6,000 billion miles).

"Thus," Dr. Struve said, "we receive now the light of the star, possessing one of these planets, which left its source 50,000 years ago and, conversely, any intelligent beings on such an average galactic planet would see the sun, and (if they possess adequate instruments) the earth as it was 50,000 years ago.

"We see at once how erroneous are the

speculations of those who believe that the visitors from another planet might have chosen this particular time to send their flying saucers to the earth because they were aware of the sad state of affairs in the community of nations of the earth.

"If they have any knowledge of human beings, they would be aware now of the type of human beings that populated the earth at the time of the Neanderthal man. Chances are that they would be completely disinterested in what the Neanderthal man was doing or thinking.

"Thus to an astronomer, the evidence of the flying saucers appears to be completely negative. Nevertheless, as astronomers, we are not primarily concerned with the question of flying saucers, and to us it should be a source of inspiration that science now favors the belief that within our galaxy there must be thousands of planets that now support life that is not too different from the kind we observe on the earth."

Science News Letter, August 30, 1952

AERONAUTICS

Precision-Flying Jets Make First U. S. Bow

See Front Cover

► THE "SKYBLAZERS," in diamond formation, skim just above the ground in one of their precision-flying maneuvers, as shown on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER. The jet team is scheduled to perform publicly for the first time in the United States at the International Aviation Exposition in Detroit, Aug. 30, 31 and Sept. 1. The Air Force fliers performed overseas in 11 countries.

Science News Letter, August 30, 1952

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