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SST Sonic Boom, Cancer and Mink: Victory at the Expense of Truth

IN 1971, WHEN it was decided not to build the supersonic transport, one of the more effective arguments used by the Eco-Freaks and their allies in the Congress was that it would disrupt the upper atmosphere and cause a drastic increase in cancer.

To be sure, there were other arguments put forth by the Disaster Lobby — such as the charge that the SST's sonic boom would inhibit the sex life of the domestic mink — but the cancer scare was one of the more horrifying possibilities raised.

In an impassioned plea on the Senate floor, Sen. Edward Kennedy condemned the SST. "Perhaps the most frightening specter of supersonic flight," said Kennedy, "came in investigations conducted by James McDonald, senior physicist at the Institute of Atmospheric Physics at the University of Arizona.

He concluded that the additional water vapor pumped into the stratosphere by a fleet of SSTs would reduce the ozone which filters ultraviolet rays from the sun. McDonald testified the increase in this ultraviolet radiation could cause 5,000 to

10,000 more cases of skin cancer in the United States."

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WHAT KENNEDY failed to say was that immediately after his congressional testimony, McDonald also had a few words to say about UFOs. In his opinion, flying saucers had come from outer space and were also wreaking considerable havoc in the United States causing, among other things, the electrical power failures in New York City.

Sen. William Proxmire was another opponent of the SST who worried about the pollution it might cause. Appearing on the nationally televised news show "Issues and Answers," the Wisconsin Democrat quoted "some scientists" as saying the "most dangerous" thing about the supersonic plane was that "it could increase the ultraviolet radiation on the planet. It could damage plant and animal and even human life."

Russell Train, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, echoed Proxmire's fears. He contended that the SST would cause a "100% increase" in the

stratosphere's moisture content and this could have two adverse effects:

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1. IT WOULD DESTROY some of the upper atmosphere's ozone reducing its capacity to shield us from the potentially deadly ultra-violet sun rays; and
 2. It would adversely effect the heat balance of the entire atmosphere causing the Earth's surface temperature to rise.

Anti-SST Eco-Freaks overseas also made these same arguments. Richard Wiggs, head of the Anti-Concorde Project opposing the British supersonic transport, accused technology of having "run riot." Wiggs worried about the Concorde raising the world's temperature and melting the polar ice caps. "It's a very real danger," he said, "that vast areas of London and many other cities throughout the world would be flooded."

But now the facts are in. And as you may have guessed, the anti-SST people were wrong.

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A THREE-YEAR STUDY released by the Dept. of Transportation dispels any

fears that the present fleet of SSTs will damage the Earth's protective blanket of ozone. The study — which drew on more than 1,000 investigators and 16 U.S. and foreign government agencies — says that the 16 Anglo-French Concorde and 14 Soviet SSTs now flying or scheduled for service will cause atmosphere changes so minimal they won't even be detectable.

When the environmentalists were engaging in their hysterical antitechnology witch hunt against the SST, one of them explained why. George Alderson, a lobbyist for Friends of the Earth, said: "The environmental movement really needs a clear-cut victory right now and the SST presents an excellent opportunity."

Well, indeed it did. The Eco-Freaks and their allies got their victory. But the victory came at the expense of the truth.

The supersonic transport was defeated by a sophisticated and well-orchestrated use of the Big Lie technique. This is a good thing to remember the next time you hear the Disaster Lobby warning us of impending ecological catastrophe unless something is or is not done.