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Victory for 'Eco-Freaks' Comes at Truth's Expense

WASHINGTON — 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 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 mind — 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, "is that the SST would cause a cancer scare."

Russell Train, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, echoed Prout's fears. He contended that the SST "would cause a 100 per cent increase" in the stratosphere's moisture content and this would have two adverse effects:

1. It would destroy some of the upper atmosphere's ozone, reducing its capacity to shield us from the potentially deadly ultraviolet sun rays; and
2. It would adversely affect 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 Wigg, head of the Anti-Concorde Project opposing the British supersonic transport, accused technology of having "run riot." Wigg worried about the Concorde raising the world's temperature and melting the polar ice caps. "It's a real danger," he said, "that vast areas of London and many other cities throughout the world would be flooded."

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

A three-year study released by the Department of Transportation disputes 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 engaged 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 debated 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.