

Moon Hotels, Human Stones and Exobiology AAAS Title 154

The December 1967 AAAS, being held in a Hilton Hotel in New York, gave first priority to the President of the Hilton Hotel Corporation, Mr Barron Hilton. He announced that there will be 100-room underground hotels on the Moon. Being then only 40 years of age, Mr Hilton hoped that he personally would open the first Lunar Hilton Hotel. But I was skeptical! Rightly so?

In my report in the *Daily Telegraph* on 27 December I began: "Trade will follow space exploration, as surely as trade followed the flag in the exploration of our own planet." Then I quoted Mr Hilton "If peace continues in outer space, there will be travellers, and where there are travellers there will be Hilton Hotels." Giving Mr Hilton the generous age of 'four score years and ten', by the year 2017 he may just be lucky enough to fulfil his wish.

"Human Stones" was the title of Dame Kathleen Lonsdale's "Moving Frontiers of Science" lecture, analysing the occurrence of bladder and kidney stones in men and women in various occupations in Europe and America. At the time, Dame Kathleen was one of the world's foremost crystallographers, and during many years had analysed over 1000 stones, some as old as 200 years. She had by no means found all the answers, but hoped that a slight change in secondary crystal formation would lead to a natural cure. I transmitted a report to London on this interesting subject, but it was not used.

Exobiology was in 1967 a novel scientific discipline, no doubt stimulated by the appearance of UFOs. At a crowded joint meeting of the AAAS and the American Astronomical Society, the possibility of extra-terrestrial life and various possibilities of defining 'life' itself, were hotly discussed. At that time the US Congress had cut the budget of NASA by 8%, and this led to great fury among some US space scientists. They threatened to "bootleg the American space programme and join their Russian Colleagues in a joint search for extra-terrestrial life" as Dr B. Wagner of Columbia University put it.

He stated that there were then 10 million Americans convinced that UFOs were of extra-terrestrial origin, and instead of the all-too conservative American Apollo Moon program, scientists should engage in research to find a way of communicating with those from other planets, the 'proper' exobiology.

The visitors from space could then tell us how to cure cancer and how to run our political affairs. The believers were like children "who know what is in the Christmas box, because they wanted it". In Dr Wagner's opinion the subject of UFOs had led to "A constipation of thought and a diarrhoea of words". I found some of the long discussions iconoclastic, though stimulating, but the subject too novel to reach any valid conclusions. I did not report it.