

No Politics In B-36, Says Northrop

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 18 (AP). Plane Maker John K. Northrop, whose contract to build Flying Wings for the Air Force was canceled in favor of the B-36, doesn't believe politics had anything to do with it.

He testified to this effect on Wednesday before a House subcommittee which is investigating reports that political favoritism may have influenced selection of the B-36 as an Air Force weapon.

Another witness, Oliver P. Echols, Northrop board chairman and onetime chief of the Air Force Materiel Command, said: "I was probably more responsible than anyone else for having the B-36 ordered. I don't see how political influence could have been brought to bear in awarding the contract."

Northrop said Secretary of Air Symington notified him in the summer of 1948 that the contract for 30 B-49s was being canceled. He said he didn't ask why.

He said he deduced from the newspaper accounts, however, that the Air Force wanted a bomber with a longer range than the Flying Wing.

Earlier Echols had testified that in the B-36 the Air Force got what it wanted—"a 10,000-mile bomber that could carry a 10,000-pound bomb load."

Echols also told the investigators that Floyd Odlum, head of Consolidated Vultee, makers of the B-36, once suggested to him that Northrop and Consolidated should merge. Northrop rejected the idea, he said, because it did not wish to lose its identity.