



Clipped Wings: The American SST Conflict

Mel Horwitch

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Should the United States build a commercial supersonic passenger plane? In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the question seemed purely rhetorical to the experts - the federal government, the aerospace industry, and the elite of American technology. Yet the SST was grounded by the American public

Clipped Wings is the fascinating story of the grass-roots movement, a new socio-environmental constituency that achieved its first dramatic victory with the SST and since then has moved on to new challenges such as opposition to nuclear power. Based on extensive interviews and original documents (many of which had to be declassified through the Freedom of Information Act), the book is also a solid history of the SST. It follows the actions of key individuals in the conflict, including Robert McNamara, FAA Administrator Najeeb Halaby, environmental activist William A. Shurcliff, and Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. New facts and quotations are presented that will startle many readers.

Horwitch emphasizes that environmental protest alone did not bring this immense undertaking to a halt; inherent weaknesses and internal flaws helped disable the program. *Clipped Wings* details the bureaucratic intrigues, managerial inadequacies, economic difficulties, and technical failures that played significant roles in terminating the SST.

Mel Horwitch is Assistant Professor of Management in the Corporate Strategy, Policy and Planning Group at MIT's Sloan School of Management. He notes that the SST case has been widely used in a diverse range of courses and executive training programs. It is a history that has much to offer to an informed public in an age of proliferating and active stakeholders, Concorde, and Synfuel Corporations.

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