The American supersonic transport may not be ready to rise again like the phoenix but there is a faint stirring in the ashes.

Over opposition from New York, where the Anglo-French Concorde SST is a painful subject, the House last week authorized $15 million for research into the practicality of such an aircraft, given the technology to make it economically and environmentally acceptable. The vote came a day less than six years after Congress aborted a Boeing SST and wrote off the billion dollars that it had cost.

This being open season on the foreign SST, the step, though small, suggests a renewal of competition. That may increase British-French resentment over failure to win landing rights for the Concorde at New York's Kennedy airport. The intransigence of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey on that point has pushed the French to threats of retaliation and the British to apoplectic fumings in Parliament. Between them the countries have blown more than $2 billion to launch the 1,300-mile-an-hour ocean-hopper, and while the investment will never be recovered, regular service on the lucrative New York run would slow the flight toward insolvency to subsonic pace.

Last year, then Secretary of Commerce William T. Coleman Jr. authorized a 16-month trial at Dulles International Airport, which the Government runs, and Kennedy to determine if the plane might be unacceptably noisy and dirty, as its critics have insisted. Kennedy balked, with encouragement from politicians in New York City and Albany who feared constituent distress. The tests at Dulles have proceeded with minimal grumbling from Virginia neighbors.

The British and the French, who have strong central governments, can't comprehend how a lesser entity such as the port authority—or New York State or City, for that matter—could defy Washington and get away with it. Those governments contend that the port authority is being allowed to contravene treaty rights between them and the United States which previous Administrations had agreed to enforce. While their yard may not be noisy, small, voracious, and archaic, their point is persuasive. Washington guaranteed a fair test of the aircraft and the obligation should be honored.

Considering the furor over the Concorde, is there any point in throwing another $15 million at an American SST? The principal benefit from the Concorde has been demonstration of the inadequacy of its 1950s design. Economical, efficient, faster-than-sound air transport may never be developed. But should it be, a nation that prides itself on technological superiority would want to be in front. A few million in the name of foresight is a bargain compared with the fortunes—and the pride and prestige—already squandered on both sides of the Atlantic.