

Editorial

The end of NASA

In an administration characterized by one policy disaster after another, sabotage of the U.S. space program might seem to be a relatively minor event; the contrary, however, is the case.

In the summer of this year, President Bush appointed Vice President Quayle to head yet another review committee, charged with assessing the performance of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). They have come up with a recommendation not only to virtually mothball the Shuttle fleet, and to vastly limit manned space travel, but to rethink the aims of the entire space exploration, and potential colonization program. Thus Bush has reversed himself from his Moon-Mars initiative of only one year ago.

NASA's performance over the past several years has suffered from a continued attrition of funds, and the postponement of missions and deadlines for such crucial programs as the Space Station. Upgrading to next-generation technologies, not to speak of replacement of the Shuttle fleet, is long overdue.

The report issued by the Quayle panel, and according to news reports accepted by NASA Administrator Richard Truly, said that some criticisms of the space agency were "deserved and occasionally even self-inflicted," because the agency was trying to do too many things on limited budgets.

While the recommendation that a new fleet of large unmanned rockets be developed to launch heavy payloads into space is one to which we subscribe, the proposed trade-off of this with curtailment of manned flight in space is a disastrous mistake. There is also no question but that the Shuttle could be improved; the problem is that the decision has been made in a climate of budget slashing and, worse still, of redefining the objectives of the space program.

The panel suggested that NASA give its highest priority to scientific research and that its program be judged in the future according to how well it meets this challenge. This new mission, they would say, ranks "above space stations, aerospace planes, manned missions to the planets, and many other major pursuits which often receive greater visibility." Furthermore, a

major scientific objective of the new NASA would be the monitoring of Earth's environment from space.

While President Reagan endorsed the goals of the Paine Commission for colonizing Mars by the middle of the next century, Lyndon LaRouche has been *the* presidential candidate, in recent years, to most vigorously support a U.S. frontier in space. In his recent congressional campaign, LaRouche reissued his classic television program, "The Woman on Mars," first shown during his 1988 presidential campaign, which dramatized his proposal for the colonization of that planet with fusion-propelled space ships.

LaRouche has pointed repeatedly to the years of the Kennedy presidency as a heuristic model for an economic recovery today. Investment in research and development during the Apollo program did more than land an American on the Moon; it created a climate of investment, which President Kennedy fostered with tax and credit incentives to industry. Advances in productivity, expansion of infrastructure, and most important of all, a climate of technological optimism were created.

The productivity gains which resulted in a more than 10-to-1 return on investment in R&D for the Apollo program, gave the American economy a new lease on life, which has allowed it to survive during the decades of mismanagement that followed. Unfortunately, we are coming to the end of that lease.

Another great Apollo program, such as LaRouche's proposal that the United States build a 100,000-person science city on Mars, over a 40-year period, is the only road out of the deepening economic depression. Instead of following this path, the Bush administration appears to be headed in the opposite direction.

When the amended Clean Air Act was signed into law, we warned that this would destroy whatever was left of U.S. economic potential. Now, we see the evil proposal to turn NASA away from the stars, into an adjunct of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The proposals of this panel must be rejected. America must lift its face out of the mud, and turn its eyes back to the stars.