

# Panel seeks to end manned space program

by Marsha Freeman

On Dec. 10 the Advisory Committee on the Future of the U.S. Space Program headed by Martin Marietta Corp.'s president, Norman Augustine, released its recommendations, which essentially called for the phaseout of the manned space program. This unprecedented capitulation to the pragmatic environment of budgetary straitjacket in Washington, by people who played leading roles in the space program, leaves only isolated individuals, small pro-space groups, and the political movement affiliated with Lyndon LaRouche, as the spokesmen for the future of space exploration.

The sweeping recommendations, if implemented, would allow the Space Shuttle to be retired out of existence past the turn of the century. Space Station Freedom would be reduced to a small laboratory focusing only on life science research and microgravity experiments, rather than a permanent manned presence in space, and transportation node to the rest of the Solar System. President Bush's Moon/Mars Exploration Initiative is reduced, by the Augustine Committee, to a noble long-range goal which should be scheduled on the basis of "affordability," the most frequently used concept in the report.

Had this advisory committee been headed by pop "science" figure Carl Sagan, its use of the lying argument that man in space takes money away from science, as the basis for recommending the end of the manned space program, would hardly have surprised us. But considering the distinguished makeup of the committee, there is no explanation but cowardice to account for how its members unanimously signed on to this report.

Among the 12 members of the Augustine Committee were Tom Paine, the head of NASA when Apollo 11 landed on the Moon; former astronaut Dr. Joseph Allen; Gen. Robert Herres (ret.), head of Air Force Space Command; Edward "Pete" Aldridge, Secretary of the Air Force when that service contributed \$1.8 billion to replace the Challenger Shuttle orbiter; and former House Science and Technology Committee Chairman Don Fuqua, who now heads the Aerospace Industries Association.

At the press conference announcing the committee's findings, National Space Council head and Vice President Dan Quayle elatedly announced the committee would reconvene in six months to see how successfully NASA is implementing its recommendations. According to *Washing-*

*ton Technology* newspaper, the White House will not request any funds for the Exploration Initiative to the Moon and Mars in the next, fiscal year 1992, NASA budget.

## The end of man in space

Specifically, the committee recommended that, after the Endeavour orbiter is built to replace the Challenger, no more orbiters for the Space Shuttle fleet be built. Past the turn of the century, when the current fleet of orbiters reaches retirement age, there will be *no* manned vehicles to take anyone anywhere, as the only man-rated vehicles in the U.S. space program are the Shuttles. Though the committee admits that there is a high probability that an orbiter from the Shuttle fleet will be lost over the decade of the 1990s, they do not recommend replacement.

The Augustine Committee suggests that Space Station Freedom not be built; that it is too big—and mainly, too expensive. Something "less complex" should be built, if there is the money. Most dramatic is the recommendation that the mission *from* planet Earth—i.e., to anywhere else such as the Moon or Mars—be done on a "go-as-you-pay" basis, scheduled to "match the availability of funds."

To make it look as if they are positively recommending *something*, the committee suggests NASA concentrate on the Mission to Planet Earth. While that is a valuable Earth remote-sensing effort, it is touted by the Greenies as being sure to provide support for all of their hoaxes, "global warming," ozone hole, and the like.

## Lies about the past and future

The committee justifies its wretchedly short-sighted recommendations by lying about both the past and the future of the U.S. space program.

While the committee usefully demonstrates the fact that the recent problems with the Hubble Space Telescope and Space Shuttle hydrogen leaks were not the most serious difficulties in space exploration, by reviewing the numbers of rockets that have blown up on the launch pad, the committee also makes the incredible statement that "no goal short of perfection is acceptable." If that were the case, no one would ever launch *anything*.

Perfection is emphatically *not* the goal of the space program, not just because it is unattainable, but because it is the very lack of fear of failure which allows real breakthroughs to be made on the frontiers of science and exploration.

There is no consensus on what the future of the space program should be, the committee asserts, yet the bibliography in Appendix V includes the studies of the past 10 years which have *all* recommended the same progression of technologies and missions, with the goal of getting back to the Moon and then to Mars.

The members of the Augustine Committee have capitulated to the demoralization characteristic of a policy-making process which is based on dollars, but no sense.