

NASA
HQ

October 11, 1961

Dr. Hugh L. Dryden
Deputy Administrator
National Aeronautics & Space Administration
1520 H Street, Northwest
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Hugh:

I am very grateful to you for your cordial letter of October 6, which is indeed of the deepest interest to me.

Let me say immediately that the new organizational plan for NASA headquarters strikes me as being a most constructive change and that in particular the allocation of effort in biological sciences corresponds precisely to the views I have held for some time. The statement in the last paragraph of page 2 of your letter corresponds exactly to the recommendations I had urged on the Kety Committee two years ago. In line with the same reasoning I have concluded that any consultative contribution that I could make in exobiology would be more effective in close coordination with other aspects of space science, through the planetary and interplanetary subcommittee rather than through the advisory committee for the Office of Life Sciences and I have accordingly served with the former. Perhaps I need take no more of your time to illustrate my enthusiastic support for the premises of the new administrative arrangements.

I am sure that you would be the first to caution that tables of organization do not, themselves, solve our problem though they may help furnish the means to find the solutions. I am very deeply disturbed about the inadequacies of our effort in planetary exploration, the evaluation of the rare opportunities that each planetary opposition gives, to be forever lost. I feel that we are making a tremendous political blunder in restraining our efforts in this direction. These remarks are partly provoked by the "information" that the drop sond to the Mars surface from Mariner B is likely to be cancelled for reasons other than our inherent technical capacity. Instead of this I have urged, to the contrary, a much more vigorous and spectacular effort as may perhaps have come to your attention via the enclosed letter. If you have not seen this before may I urge you to take time to consider it. The substance of this letter was also enthusiastically endorsed by the Planetary and Interplanetary Sciences subcommittee at its meeting 14 June 1961.

If there is any other way in which I can press these views, I

Dryden

hope you will be able to let me know about it at the PSAC Panel meeting next Wednesday, on which occasion I am looking forward to seeing you again.

I trust you will understand that my hopeful and critical remarks do not mar my appreciation for the magnificent effort we have constructed on space science - rarely can so much have been accomplished in so short a time.

With cordial regards,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

eve

61F1

Johnson letter 61E1