

Westex 4-a
9-26-59

CALL FOR MEETING

Westex-4 is scheduled to meet at 10 AM, Saturday, September 26.

I am looking forward to welcoming you at the new Stanford Medical Center, where we will be meeting in the Faculty Room, M-121-C (inside M-121). As customary, we will probably adjourn in time for supper. This meeting, and any subsequent ones we may elect to hold, will be supported by the Space Science Board, which body is most anxious to have our advice on long-term plans and immediate tactics for the biological exploration of space.

AGENDA

Calvin will report on the Bioastronautics Committee panel meeting at Woods Hole (copies of the report of his panel have been forwarded through the Space Science Board and are enclosed).

Davies has attended the meeting in London of the International Federation for Astronautics and will report on the reaction to his paper on decontamination procedures.

Carl Sagan has been preparing some critical resumé's on the habits of Mars and Venus; if possible, duplicated copies will be distributed; otherwise, the drafts will be available at the meeting.

The Space Science Board will hold its next meeting in Washington October 23-24. I hope that Westex can formulate concrete suggestions for the development of exobiological experimentation. Given obvious restrictions on the scope of these experiments, what kind of information should be given first priority, and how should it be collected? (I hope to be able to contribute a working paper on this point at or in advance of the meeting; similar contributions from other members would be most welcome.)

Decontamination of planetary probes seems to be a settled principle now, at least from the scientific standpoint, in view of the reports and reactions of the Space Science Board, the Bioastronautics Panel, the Jet Propulsion Laboratories (and ourselves). There still seem to be some uncertainties on the part of NASA headquarters, probably because there is no one there to take central responsibility for problems of exobiology. I believe we still have two major problems in communication: (1) to urge NASA to set up its own section specifically charged with directing exobiological research, and (2) to find the sine qua non of a channel to Russian scientists who should be concerned with the same problems. To achieve (1) we might be able to help by suggesting particular people in whom we could place great confidence to direct the program (whether this is based at Washington or JPL or wherever), and by stressing the importance of some central direction. Glennan has recently appointed another advisory committee on life sciences (cf. enclosure) but once again this appears to be almost entirely focussed on man-in-space. Any new ideas on (2)?

Please let me know your wishes or needs for accommodations or anything else that would help for the meeting. My new phone number at the Medical Center is DAvenport 1-1200 Ext. 5052 (24-hour service now!); at home (715 Partridge Ave., Menlo Park, effective Sept. 15) DA-2-0686.

The printed enclosures have been furnished for your information by SSB.
Enc: Science in Space. N.Y. Times clipping J. Lederberg
Bioastronautics Panel 2, report. (8/22/59)