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January 3, 1961

Dr. Hugh Odishaw
National Academy of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Hugh:

Ostensibly this is a reply to your letter of December 15th to Pittendrigh, cc to Novick and myself. I hope you realize that I am Novick's limited partner in this enterprise and whether you do or do not get a manuscript will depend mainly on his initiative and available time.

Over the past few months, I have been thinking more and more what the role of the Academy should be in the further development of the national space program. As NASA develops its own operational organization, it is bound to appear, and altogether not without substance, that the Board is duplicating some functions that are already well taken care of. I am not much worried about external criticism on this but I think it is important not to waste people's time when this is such a precious commodity these days. Apart from some of the specific consultative responsibilities that the Board has undertaken, one should be able to argue with some force that the very existence of the Board will continue to be of indispensable value in maintaining the integrity of our national program.

As you know, the aspect of our space policy that I am most concerned about is man-in-space. I am concerned, on the one hand, that we are being committed to a program that has not been well-thought out strategically, perhaps even tactically, which may be not only a waste of resources, time and effort, but may actually do us a great deal of harm from a political standpoint. On the other hand, I have the opposite concern that if man-in-space is a legitimate program that we should be supporting, it has been presented in such a fashion as to antagonize a large segment of the scientific community and this can only do the program itself and the whole national space effort a great deal of harm. What I cannot understand is why the Board has failed to come to grips with this program during at least the last two years. I do not think it an adequate reply that man-in-space is to be separated from science-in-space and that only the latter is the Board's responsibility.

Perhaps NASA or the Services or both have already made a study of our national objectives in manned exploration which would furnish an adequate basis of national policy. But if this is the case, the document is not widely known to exist and should be given critical attention.

Dr. Odishaw, cont.

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I do not believe that this is a problem that can be relegated to one of the small subcommittees of the Board, although, of course, Lambertsen's committee should be in a position to collect some of the more important technical information. What I would like to press for is that (1) the matter of national policy in manned exploration be on the agenda as a major item for the next meeting of the Board and (2) that NASA and the Services be pressed to furnish policy information in this area for review by the Board. We should hope to end up with a statement, preferably from NASA but if not, from the Board, that could clarify our goals and serve to mitigate the present very harmful division of purpose. This may be a messy situation but if we do not, even if necessary on our own initiative, tackle problems of this kind then I wonder if we are effectively discharging our responsibilities.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics