

Memo

To: SSB Executive Committee
From: J Lederberg

Subject: Policy on International Cooperation in Space.

1. We are continually being trapped by the USSR into a polarization of cooperation in space by bilateral agreement. This merely focusses more attention on the contest. There is no special virtue in our "cooperation" with the USSR that tends to exclude the useful role of other nations.
2. COSPAR is oriented towards eliciting communication from the USSR. But it tends to undercut the political role of the UN in establishing global aspirations for extraterrestrial exploration. COSPAR itself is inherently ~~inert~~ impotent from a political standpoint, which is precisely why the USSR insists on it as a sole channel.
3. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ I recommend that we unilaterally take all possible measures to strengthen the role of the UN as the vehicle of earthly ventures into space. We should offer whatever facilities we can, regardless of what the USSR does for its part. We can reasonably expect either a co-participation on their part, or if they hold back, at worst that US-NASA will be the chosen technical vehicle for the effort. (This would be analogous to the UN's sponsorship of the Korean war, in the face of USSR opposition; whatever the demerits~~s~~ or merits of this, it was at least a politically far more tenable position than a US national effort in Korea would have been.)
4. Our stated aspirations should then be that the vehicles exploring celestial bodies should carry the UN flag, and whatever possible substance to international participation would justify this. This should also imply the participation of non-US nationals in orbital, lunar flight, etc.
5. All this is based on the premise that we really are trying to denationalize the exploration of space, which may be open to some question, especially in Congress. If this is not a feasible goal, we should be careful not to be trapped by our own proposals.
6. On the other hand, it would be futile and enervating to propose cooperation only at a technical level, without the political implications inherent in UN sponsorship. Exchange of policy and delegation of responsibility is possible at the top; except in a few areas -- synoptic experimentation; tracking...----- it would frustrate detailed experimental organization at operational levels, except insofar as other nationals could be welcomed as participants in our space laboratories.
7. Harry Brown should be in touch with you anent specific USSR proposals made at the Stowe conference. But I am opposed to adopting broad policy (contra technical implementation) ~~at~~ by bilateral agreement, unless we mean to scrap the UN altogether.