

News and Comment

Space Budget: Opposition Grows as Scientists, Congressmen, Voice Concern about Lunar Landing Goal

The secret hope of space agency officials is that the U.S. Congress will awaken one day soon to find that the Soviets have placed the Bolshoi Ballet in orbit. (The Air Force, which is yet to convince the administration of the need for a large-scale military space program, would no doubt rather it was the Red Army Chorus—or, even better, the Red Air Force Chorus, if such exists—since the military significance of such an event, while totally lacking, could nevertheless be made to appear overwhelming.)

But, in any case, it is now plain that the administration's lunar landing program is running into serious political opposition, and, if anything can pull it out of trouble, it is a Soviet space extravaganza. Kennedy himself came close to acknowledging this at a recent press conference when he remarked that the drive to cut the space budget will be followed by a "feeling of 'why didn't we do more'" after the Soviets make "another new, dramatic breakthrough."

The latest to join the pack at NASA's well-chewed heels is the Senate Republican Policy Committee, which said that numerous terrestrial needs, mostly related to human welfare, should perhaps be satisfied before we go to the expense and trouble of putting people on the moon. This view was expressed in a 19-page space critique, "A Matter of Priority," which said that "no fruitful discussion can be held unless the emotional trappings, the verbal excesses are removed. A cold, careful examination," the committee said, "is past due." It then went on to ask such neutral questions as, "Is it more important to have a man on the moon than to conquer cancer, which will take the lives of 40 million Americans now living?" "Is a fistful of lunar dust meaningful to the 17 million Ameri-

cans who, we are told, go to bed hungry each night?" And, "Of what value are the charts of the moon to the 129 Americans now entombed in an uncharted ocean [in the sunken submarine *Thresher*]?"

Lest the faithful should begin to fear that the committee had become unhinged or, even worse, had gone over to the side of the big welfare spenders, the critique made it clear that, while the moon program may be taking funds that could be used to eliminate human misery, "no advocacy of large government spending programs is intended. However," the committee added, "within the framework of fiscal responsibility, these problems should, perhaps, be examined side by side with the moon shot program."

That the moon program is going to be given the closest examination of its short life is now clear from Republican Committee and other congressional rumblings. It should also be noted, though, that the administration's prestige is inextricably lashed to the goal of going to the moon, and that the space agency, whatever its technical shortcomings may be, is well staffed and coached by some of the shrewdest political broken-field runners in the administration.

It is no accident, for example, that NASA Administrator James E. Webb is the only head of a major federal research and development agency whose background is political and fiscal, rather than technical. Early in his career, Webb became acquainted with Capitol Hill as a congressional staff assistant, and he later served, under Truman, as Director of the Bureau of the Budget and Undersecretary of State. He came to NASA from the post of assistant to the president and director of the Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, whose chairman, the late Senator Robert S. Kerr (D.-Okla.), headed one of the friendliest committees the space agency ever had on Capitol Hill, the Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee. Not surpris-

ingly, Webb is reported to have told his NASA subordinates that he would take care of the political side of the space program while they attended to its technical problems. And it is apparent that a fine sensitivity for political breezes exists at the top of NASA.

For example, when Air Force shrieks about exclusion from the manned space program reached ear-splitting proportions, the administration announced that eventually Air Force personnel would be given an opportunity to ride in the two-man Gemini space capsule, though the program will still be under NASA management. The Air Force is not happy about this arrangement, but it cannot deny that its demands have been at least partially met. In addition, after the scientific community began to press its demands for inclusion of a trained scientist in the moon landing crew, Webb swayed with the breeze and, last week, announced that eventually a scientist would be sent to the moon. (There are some scientists whom the space agency would like to land on the moon—or, preferably, the sun—tomorrow!) And finally, in an effort to defuse criticism of the space program from within the scientific community, NASA, in conjunction with the National Academy of Sciences, last summer convened a Space Science Summer Study, whose report is now the standard rebuttal to the contention that the scientific community is dissatisfied with the space program. The community is not brimming over with joy, but the fact is that this prestigious study "enthusiastically endorsed the NASA space science program on the whole" and declared the moon landing program to be "an integral part of the NASA effort." It found fault here and there with NASA's scientific effort, but pointed out that its criticisms "should be read in the light of this over-all general endorsement."

At the presidential level, criticism of the space program is being treated as a cross between subversion and insanity. The White House frequently harks back to the point that, when Kennedy proposed the lunar landing early in his administration, he told the Congress that it should not take the first step unless it was willing to go all the way. It indeed took the first step, unanimously and literally without debate, but it is a prodigious feat of conclusion-jumping to assume that the Congress was thereby accepting the President's condition of all the way or nothing. Constitutionally and morally

it is fully entitled to disband the entire space program tomorrow if it so chooses. It of course is not going to do anything of the sort, but it is increasingly sensitive to the fact that it has no one but itself to blame, in this and other instances, when it complains that decision making at the executive level is eroding the legislative function and turning Capitol Hill into nothing but a ratifier of White House programs.

The result is that the members of both houses are now far less inclined than formerly to accept the judgments of their respective space committees, which, if anything, have heretofore been more pro-space than even NASA. And they are beginning to rebel against the rather well founded argument that cuts in the NASA budget would not be reassigned to welfare programs. Kennedy, for example, argued at a press conference, "some people say that we should take the money we are putting into space and put it into housing or education. We set up a very extensive educational program. My judgment is that what would happen would be that they would cut the space program and you would not get additional funds for education. We have enough resources, in my opinion, to do what needs to be done in the field, for example of education, and to do what needs to be done in space."

This is the standing response to the "earthly needs first" argument, and a good case can be made for its validity. But even this position is now coming under attack, and from some of the administration's best friends in Congress. Earlier this month, in delivering the annual Clayton lectures at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Senator William Fulbright (D.-Ark.), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, expressed his influential doubts.

"It is contended," he said, "that we did not spend enough money on these worthwhile [education, welfare, and economic development] purposes before we had a space program and that there is no assurance that we would increase our efforts in these areas if the space program were abandoned or reduced. This seems to me partly but not entirely accurate. The Congress has come close on several occasions to adopting a meaningful program of federal aid to education and it is quite possible that the reduction of costs in other areas such as space would provide the necessary impetus for the enactment of an education bill. In any case, I find the

negative argument that we would not in any case use funds that now go into space for other constructive purposes a singularly unconvincing reason for the expenditure of vast sums of public money. This argument itself, in my opinion, strengthens the case for greater efforts in education."

(Fulbright then assailed the prestige-race argument by recounting the story of the Soviet pupil who was told of plans to land a Russian on the moon. The pupil agreed that this was fine, but asked, "When may we go to Vienna?")

In defense of its request for \$5.7 billion, an increase of \$2 billion over its current budget, NASA has argued that it is seeking no more than is necessary for carrying out the program just this side of a "crash" basis. The program, Webb has said, is a "fast-paced" one, employing resources at a high level but not going to the extreme of working around the clock. Any cut-back, he warned, would stretch out the timetable for landing Americans on the moon, and returning them safely, before the end of this decade. It would also, he has told employment-minded Congressmen, result in a reduction of existing jobs under NASA contracts. Since no one wants to take the blame for letting the Russians get to the moon first, or for reducing employment, it is extremely doubtful that NASA is going to emerge from the appropriations mill minus any critical amounts of money. And it is worth remembering that since the space budget defies comprehension on anything but a career basis, what comes out of one page can often be compensated for on another. But it seems that NASA has reached the point in its career where it is going to have to run the gauntlet of a critical Congress—an activity in which the National Institutes of Health is now becoming experienced. Congress no longer takes NIH, or space, on faith, and while it is deeply committed to a policy of generosity for both, it is no longer surrendering its judgment to the executive.—D. S. GREENBERG

Birth Control: Catholic Opinion Varies Widely on Rock's New Book

Catholic reviewers, lay and clerical, have now had an opportunity to say their piece on John Rock's recently published book, *The Time Has Come: A Catholic Doctor's Proposals To End the Battle over Birth Control* (Knopf, New York, 1963. 204 pp. \$3.95).

Their reactions are as interesting as the book, which is indeed an interesting one, and provide some illuminating examples of the intellectual ferment which exists in the supposedly monolithic Church.

Rock, who organized the field trials for the now widely used progesterone oral contraceptive, retired as clinical professor of gynecology in 1956 after a 34-year association with Harvard Medical School. Now, at age 73, he is director of the Rock Reproductive Clinic and one of the most active and articulate public campaigners for family planning.

Rock's thesis, briefly, is that Catholics and non-Catholics are fundamentally in agreement on the usefulness of limiting family size; the difference occurs on the question of method. To resolve this difference, he suggests, ample funds should be made available for research that would provide more certainty for all methods, including the rhythm method, which is alone acceptable to Catholics; at the same time, public funds should be made available for providing birth control counseling acceptable to all faiths. Catholics, for example, would be counseled exclusively on the rhythm method.

As for the pill, Rock concedes that it is not now acceptable to the Church, but he contends that Church leaders should reconsider their position. When progesterone is naturally secreted, he argues, it induces the "safe" period of the rhythm method, and, during pregnancy, it protects the fertilized ovum against a competing conception.

If it is theologically acceptable to utilize this naturally induced sterility to avoid conception, he writes, why would it not be equally acceptable to utilize a sterility that is rationally decided upon and produced by a duplicate of the natural agent—namely, the pill?

The most influential answer was provided by Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, in a review published in the *Boston Pilot*. The Cardinal first rapped Rock's knuckles lightly for having failed to abide by the Church law that, as Cushing put it, "requires every Catholic who writes on a subject pertaining to faith or morality [to] submit his manuscript to Church authority for a so-called 'imprimatur'." (Rock explained at a press conference in Washington last week that he was unaware of this requirement.)

The Cardinal then went on to say that "In this book there is much that