
No Consensus Yet on a Space Station

With the time drawing near for a decision on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) proposed space station, a number of key groups have begun to weigh in with opinions on the matter. As yet, however, those opinions hardly add up to a consensus.

On 9 September, for example, the National Academy of Sciences's Space Science Board sent a carefully worded and rather ambiguous "No, thanks" to NASA administrator James M. Beggs. "If there *were* a space station, we wouldn't have any problem using the thing," explains board chairman Thomas M. Donahue of the University of Michigan. He concedes that in some ways the space station would be good for space science: NASA plans to do 30 or 40 space science missions on the station by the turn of the century, a considerable boost from current rates and certainly more than any other single activity. In addition, some of the missions might well benefit from the regular maintenance and repair available from space station crew members. "But every one of those missions has already been designed to be launched on the space shuttle," says Donahue. "So we don't *need* a space station to do them."

However, the scientists told Beggs that if NASA wanted to contemplate a more ambitious space station for the post-2000 era—say an orbital construction shack for the assembly of large antennas and optical arrays, or the assembly and launch of complex interplanetary spacecraft—they would be happy to cooperate.

By all reports, the scientists' reticence stems from their desire to avoid a repeat of their experience during the development of the space shuttle, when years of delays and cost overruns played havoc with their own programs. Something of the sort also seems to be behind the Pentagon's resistance to the space station. In the White House's Senior Interagency Group on Space, Defense Department representatives have shifted from neutrality on the subject—they claim there is no military use for a space station—to outright hostility.

Cynics wonder if the Pentagon simply does not want to help pay for it.

Within the White House proper the Office of Management and Budget is dead set against the station, which is no surprise considering that the program will cost roughly a billion dollars per year. But science adviser George A. Keyworth has shifted from neutrality to cautious support, citing the space station as a first step toward an ambitious program of manned flights to the planets (*Science*, 8 July, p. 132).

Of course, the opinion that matters most is that of Ronald Reagan, who is said to be supportive of the space station. He responded enthusiastically on 3 August, when he heard a delegation of corporate managers extol the space station as a factory site for potential zero-gravity materials-processing industries (*Science*, 30 September, p. 1353). And on 19 September, the *Washington Post* reported that the President's political advisers are urging him to announce the space station with great fanfare this fall so as to steal the thunder of Senator John Glenn, his potential Democratic opponent in next year's elections. The betting is that if Reagan does endorse the station, he will do so at the NASA 25th anniversary celebration on 23 October. —**M. MITCHELL WALDROP**

Organs for Sale

The increasing need for human organs has led to a flurry of activity in the federal government and in the private sector in an attempt to deal with the problem. But the proposed approaches are widely different.

Increased attention to the issue has followed recent reports that at least two companies are planning to act as broker for potential donors who would be recruited to sell their organs for profit. There is currently no law that prohibits such business. Reports that many organs from American donors are going to foreign patients who pay U.S. hospitals for the full cost of the transplant have also stirred concern.

Legislators in the House and Senate are now trying to set up a national clearinghouse to coordinate the donation—not the sale—of organs. At the same time, the Administration is hoping that the private sector will set up a clearinghouse on its own. Last week

Surgeon General Everett Koop met with a new committee that is charged with forming a private foundation for this purpose.

On Capitol Hill, at least two legislators are planning to introduce legislation concerning organ donation and transplantation. Representative Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) is to introduce a bill that will do three things: (i) establish a national clearinghouse to coordinate regional organizations funded by federal grants; (ii) limit transplants to hospitals that meet federal criteria; and (iii) resurrect the National Center for Health Care Technology. According to an aide, Gore is also considering a provision that would ban the sale of organs but, as yet, has not made a firm decision. Hearings on the sale of organs are scheduled for the last week in October. Senator Paul E. Tsongas (D-Mass.) also plans to introduce a bill soon that would ban the sale of organs. —**MARJORIE SUN**

New Bioethics Panel Under Consideration

The defunct presidential bioethics commission may be reincarnated in the form of a panel either within the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) or the Institute of Medicine, according to senate sources. Senator Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.) is suggesting that OTA may be the best organization to study bioethical issues for Congress, while Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) is proposing that the institute take on the task.

Last December, the bioethics commission was phased out when Congress declined to reauthorize it. Kennedy then introduced a bill to recreate the commission but again encountered tough opposition by other members of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, including Denton and committee chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). Kennedy is now suggesting that the institute may provide a satisfactory home for a bioethics panel and committee members are currently engaged in working out a solution. Institute president Frederick C. Robbins has reportedly given the idea a tentative OK.

Although talks are still preliminary, Denton's proposal may prove to be