DAVIES

JET PROPULSION LABORATORY *California Institute of Technology* • *4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena 3, California*

9 Feb 60

Dear Josh,

There is no obvious reason for me to attend to Feb 29 meeting unless you think I have some information of value for committee 11.

I would not push the problem of return contamination too hard, if the decision were mine. My reasons are not the same as Norm's but they overlap a little.

I think we would do best by ourselves to demonstrate the practicability of sterilizing payloads before advocating a more far reaching policy. This is not technically logical but it has some political merit. In the first place, the SSB is not taken too seriously in some parts of NASA by virtue of some early recommendations they made in the missile area. Science has second priority to engineering and it will continue to be that way for a decade or more if we complicate matters too quickly for the engineers to digest.

I foresee a battle with Von Braun on the use of the Saturn. We believe that the vehicle should be employed to return a sample from the moon and to explore the planets. He has MIS projects and engineering satellites in mind. We are momentarily

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in the driver's seat because NASA gave JPL supervisory control of the moon, planets + interplanetary space science projects. I am a little afraid that contamination, back contamination, etc. may be employed as emotional arguements to prove that planetary exploration is impractical, and at the same time used to discredit us. —— I haven't lost my guts and I am still willing to fight for what is sensible. But back contamination is more than a decade in the future and I think it may be premature to advise NASA on the matter at this time.

I am currently formulating the first minimal approach to Venus which will be attempted in August 62 if we have an Atlas-Centaur vehicle. My plans are to present the vehicle dynamics and suggested missions to a group of interested experts from all over the nation. I had thought of having such a meeting in about a month. Are you interested? I do not want to defer it too long because I have only three months before presenting a program to NASA.

It looks as though NASA will recommend an international space science program which may be the reason they objected so vigorously to my paper. I preempted them!

Hoping to see you soon —

Sincerely

Dick