

TALKING POINTS
SES CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
JULY 11, 1994

- New SES'ers are coming into NASA at one of the most challenging times in agency history. Conversely, it's also one of the most exciting!
- Biggest challenge for NASA is dealing with a radically different environment from what we have experienced in the past. There just isn't funding available to do all the things we used to do.
- Half the federal budget, \$750 billion is in entitlement programs. Another quarter of a trillion dollars goes to pay off the national debt. Defense gets another quarter of a trillion dollars and no one's going to cut it substantially.
- That leaves \$250 billion. Veterans medical goes up 8% a year. Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services will get their share. NASA gets the little that's left. Your job as SES'ers will be to manage the situation as creatively as possible, to do more with less.
- Situation is critical with Congress. Yes, we won the House station vote handily. But Congress is ready to pounce if we don't show

continued progress in cutting costs, or if we have a problem. We have many supporters, but it will take at least another year or two to rebuild a real Congressional constituency.

- NASA must serve its customers: industry, government, ultimately the U.S. taxpayer. Our customers want inspiration, knowledge, opportunity, technology. They do *not* want a \$14 billion-a-year jobs program. Every NASA manager, employee and contractor must understand that.

- When you assume senior positions at NASA field center, remember you work for "NASA" and not "Such-and-Such Center." Too many NASA center managers have had a territorial, survival mentality.

- If you ever believe it's your job to provide jobs and territorial control over where you work, you are violating a trust with the American people. If we do that, the American people will shut down NASA.

- As senior managers, you absolutely must be willing to take risks and encourage those under you to do the same.

(March of the Robots anecdote)

- You have to "reward" failure. Think how devastated someone who has a failure will be if they get called into your office and get chewed out for that failure. You might set them back 5 or 10 years in their ability to do something risky again.

- Go through what went wrong and help them understand it. Assume responsibility because you're in charge. It'll be amazing what they can do the *next* time.

- Make accountability your personal credo. Get the process going by walking into your boss' office and saying "Boss, I want you to trust me. Let's define my boundaries. And after we define my boundaries, let me go do my job. If I need your help, I'll come back."

- Never be reluctant to challenge the status quo. And don't just swallow what you think is a bad situation. You can sit around with your colleagues and complain in hushed tones—or, you want to walk into the boss' office and say, "Boss, I disagree with you!" If the boss threatens your career, you say, "Here's my letter of resignation." Sounds kind of chilling, but until America gets back to that place, we're going to have mediocrity.

- Also commit yourselves to increasing the diversity of NASA's workforce. To fulfill our responsibility to the nation, NASA has to "look like America."

- The American people love the space program. But it's essential that we convince them that we're spending the money wisely. And they're asking us to do things that they can see and not have to wait decades. They want to share the excitement. As NASA's future leaders, you have the responsibility to make that happen.