



# SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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SUBJECT: "LETTER TO NASA EMPLOYEES FROM ADMINISTRATOR THOMAS O. PAINE"

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July 28, 1970

Dear NASA Colleague:

By now you have surely heard of my resignation as Administrator. Enough time has passed--for it takes only a few moments via the NASA grapevine--for you to be asking the inevitable question: Why? I want to tell you informally the reasoning behind my decision, because I think it is important that in this time of transition you understand what lay behind my statement to the President: "Now is an appropriate time for a change in command at NASA, and this coincides with my wish to return to private life."

My two years as Administrator can be divided into two periods: Apollo and post-Apollo. The first involved carefully made hard decisions that led to NASA's meeting its bold commitment to the American people to achieve a manned lunar landing in the decade of the nineteen sixties. Before he retired, Jim Webb and I agreed that the success of Apollo was essential to the agency's future and that it was important for me to remain in NASA to provide a smooth transition to the next administration, if the new President wished, while the final critical missions leading to the lunar landing were flown. I know that all of you share my pride in having been a part of the NASA team on that unforgettable 20th day of July in 1969 when man first walked on another world. It was indeed "A giant leap for mankind," and a milestone for NASA that insured our program a permanent place in American life. It was followed almost immediately by the spectacular successes of Mariner 6 and 7, building on the record of achievement in the unmanned program which has brought man a new understanding of his planet and his solar system.

The first months of the new Nixon administration in Washington coincided with the Apollo 9, 10 and 11 missions. This was, in my opinion, a fortunate coincidence for NASA, because it facilitated Presidential level review and involvement in the development of the new post-Apollo space program. In the past year, my chief concern has been establishing and gaining acceptance for sound and challenging new NASA goals for the nineteen seventies, with due forethought to the progress man should make in space out to the year 2000. President Nixon also personally urged me to increase the international orientation of our program, and we have made good progress planning for this and in securing initial acceptance overseas.

Apollo 11 marked the achievement of my first concern; acceptance by the Administration and the Congress of the NASA 1971 budget endorsing our basic post-Apollo program marks the achievement of my second concern. With your support we are well underway in the difficult transition from the lunar landing oriented nineteen sixties to the diversified and balanced U. S. space program of the nineteen seventies. When our current reductions are completed, I hope and expect that NASA will have reached its minimum size and that the future will see a gradual upturn. This will, of course, be determined during the annual reviews of our program by the Administration and the Congress, but I have great faith in the value of the space program to the United States and to mankind. I also have every confidence that NASA's new management team will develop the right programs, get the required support, and carry them out competently to a successful conclusion.

From a strictly professional point of view, there's obviously enough excitement and challenge and opportunity to serve in the future space program to almost compel me to continue in NASA despite the growing demands of a family of four teenagers. But the fascinating job that I see ahead to which the Administrator must be committed will require more months of effort than my personal situation will permit.

I will miss you. I hate to leave. My heart will always be with NASA. At the same time, I have very recently been

offered and wish to accept a challenging opportunity in my old company, General Electric, which also involves important national problems and technical opportunities outside of the aerospace area. I have therefore made this difficult decision to resign but I want you to understand that I have every confidence in you, in the space program, and in the American system that gave me this wonderful opportunity to work with you in the conquest of space.