

## Editorial

### *Where We Should Go—Not Iraq*

Aug. 27's bright and bold approach of Mars, to so near an encounter with the Earth—as if to conduct a close and inquisitive inspection of mankind's progress down here—should remind us: More than a decade ago, President George H.W. Bush adopted a space-policy report calling for a return to manned Moon exploration as a step to manned voyages to Mars in the 21st Century. But he never exercised any leadership to implement that brief report. It was the last time a President even formally spoke of that goal—exploration of the Red Planet and its regions—which was once the vision of all of mankind's great rocketry scientists and space pioneers. America's real budgets for NASA's space programs shrank drastically during the 1990's so-called "New Economy boom"—a 40% decline in Shuttle funding and workforce over the decade.

When the Shuttle Columbia was destroyed with loss of seven astronauts' lives this past January, *EIR* stressed in its coverage that the *economic axioms* of that lunatic 1990s speculative, "outsourcing" consumer boom were fundamentally to blame, and would have to be changed for the United States to regain its great mission in space exploration.

The Investigation Board which examined the loss of Columbia and its crew—whose report will be examined in detail in a coming issue—although it had no mandate to discuss NASA's funding levels, fundamentally confirms the need for axioms to change. The Board does, indeed, state that NASA carried with it into the 1980s, the Apollo-era "can-do" attitude, where the agency was posed "impossible" tasks and repeatedly accomplished them. This justified confidence became overconfidence as the Shuttle fleet aged, and fewer and fewer resources were available to constantly re-engineer the fleet. The report observes that going from the challenge of landing men on the Moon, to launching and re-launching the same spacecraft for 20 years, with no future exploration goals, led to a bureaucratization and loss of engineering emphasis in the agency.

The fault for this lies with the White House and the

Congress—the 1990s decline resulted from an unholy alliance between Al Gore's "reinventing government," and Newt Gingrich's conservative budget-cutting revolution. The Board said that NASA was put in a position of trying to do "too much with too little" money. Neither the White House nor Congress has been interested in a "reinvigorated space program," its report states.

Let us start with an obvious axiom: under the prodings of Dick Cheney's imperial war-mongers around the White House, President George W. Bush has invaded Iraq at a great human cost and a cost in wealth—so far—of \$60 billion, ticking at \$4 billion a month and rising fast. This is three times the budget NASA needs for a "reinvigorated space program." This war is failing in all its supposed objectives, while Cheney's gang lays the plans for new wars like it. Yet among the same Americans who accepted this vastly costly folly, have been many who have foolishly learned to call the human mission of Mars exploration, "ridiculously costly and wasteful!"

President Reagan had the wisdom, after the 1986 Challenger disaster, to take money from the Pentagon's budget to build a new Shuttle and restore the program to flight. President George W. Bush has been given an opportunity for a greater wisdom. Reports on Aug. 28, the day after the Board's report was released, fell short of that opportunity for leadership. The President was reported, by investigative reporters from *Florida Today*, to have turned down a NASA request to add \$1.6 billion for the Space Shuttle program, as a supplemental to its FY04 budget, \$20 billion in additional funding over the next five years. NASA clearly was readying itself to implement the recommendations of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board.

But the opportunity is there, if Cheney and his crew are kicked out—pull the United States' lives and treasure out of the imperial adventure in Iraq; stop looking for targets for new wars; spend that honor and treasure on a true mission of humanity which can restore our space exploration program to the scientific, technological, and economic driver it was at its best.