

Bruce Lundin Shutdown Speech

Plum Brook Station

January 5, 1973

Members of the staff of Plum Brook Station, I've asked that we join together, we meet together here at this time to enable me to tell you all that I know and all that I can about what I learned of yesterday when I was with Jim Fletcher and George Low and others in Washington. A little bit about our country's current fiscal management and fiscal problems and some of the program actions that NASA's found it necessary to take that will have a very significant affect on all of us. I was anxious to do this at the very earliest possible moment. I am assured, and I'd just like to check this point, I'm required to [check] that only NASA Lewis Civil Service Personnel are present here in this room, and you'll see at the end a little timetable for spreading this information to broader circles than just the Lewis people.

First, I'd like to give you just a few words about the total, sort of, national picture to provide background for you and to put our necessary Lewis actions into some total picture, total context. I'll do this in a sketchy brief way so I can get to matters more important to all of us as quickly as possible.

Jim Fletcher, who's been working very closely with President Nixon the last few days, and of course with Nixon's staff, the Office of Management and Budget, the staff arm of the president. And from Jim Fletcher's very open and candid remarks to all of us yesterday it became terribly clear, and this will be no real surprise from what you've been reading in the newspaper, but very clear the President's complete determination to limit federal outlays and expenditures this year to that \$250 billion number, to have no new taxes on the people, to reduce the size of what Nixon refers to as a federal bureaucracy and if after doing all of these things he can have a strong defense establishment, he'd like that, too. But the President and from the actions that Jim Fletcher had observed in Washington, the President is indeed clear that he's going to restrict federal expenditures and have no new taxes.

There are, and we don't know the specifics because of the way the President's been kind of running this problem, operating this problem, don't know the specifics to different agencies, but as Jim Fletcher has sort of touched base with his colleagues in Washington and other agencies, he got the very clear picture of large wholesale cuts everywhere. And this will be unfolding, of course, during the month and made clear in the President's budget message on about January 29th. Some entire agencies are disappearing completely. Many of the so-called, "soft programs" or Great Society Programs will be gone. And that was sort of the general picture of Nixon's management of the fiscal matters in the country.

As regards NASA now, Jim Fletcher had a sort of a understanding and gentleman's agreement with the President that NASA could count on running on what was called his "level budget concept," which was somewhat over \$3 billion a year, about \$3.4, \$3.5 billion a year, and NASA was making its plans accordingly. That level budget understanding is now gone. And Fletcher spoke of considerable disappointment that he had to give up his level budget concept. As regards NASA in a general program sense for the rest of this fiscal year and the impact into fiscal '74, we find that the shuttle is in and the, that Apollo-Soyuz link up to the docking with the Russians in space in '75 is in. Those two items are in by Presidential direction. The Viking Program is in the budget. Our launch vehicle activities are secure at the request of the amount. Skylab is, of course, going to fly in April so that will be done. As far as the office of Roy Jackson's OAST, Aeronautics in Space Technology, is in pretty good shape. The space part of the technology is at a constant level with previous years with one important exception and the aeronautics activities, slightly up. Many other programs are disappearing from NASA. HEOS, a very large astronomy observational satellite is being terminated. SAS, Small Application Satellites, are ending. Pioneer Program will end with the flight of Pioneer G in April. A future communication satellite will not be undertaken by NASA. The general applications program and the SRT activities are rather significantly reduced in NASA.

Now as regards Lewis Center, as I mentioned, NASA finds it has to fit its total program under some, not only reductions in the NOA, the New Obligation Authority, in fiscal '74, as I mentioned but, more importantly, even to them is to fit under a very tight cost limit this current fiscal year. That's this business of the President trying to run the whole government on \$250 billion in outlays and expenditures this current fiscal year. To fit under that, NASA management and OMB, working with the Office of Management and Budget, have found it necessary to decide to terminate all R&T, research and technology work, all research work that will not be, that cannot be expected to have a needed or useful application, say for a period of, within this decade. That long-range research and technology work that cannot be expected to have a real need or application until the 1980's must be terminated at this time and priority given to more shorter range activities in say the 3 to 5 year time span.

This means that essentially all nuclear power and nuclear propulsion R&D work will be terminated this fiscal year. In view of the total national picture, and after seeing this, working with the folks in Washington, I can understand this and can therefore accept the rational for this decision. It's one I don't agree with, I don't think that it's exactly right to do it just this way, but I can understand it and accept it and that's what all of us have to do now. This means, of course, that the reactor here at Plum Brook will be closed down during the remainder of this current fiscal year. Further, because NASA finds it simply does not have the dollars and the money in its place in the national scene to run major and expensive facilities on a continuing basis just because they're there and they're doing interesting and hopefully useful things, because it can't run facilities that it doesn't clearly need, the rest of the Plum Brook Station will have to be closed down at the end of fiscal 1974. This, I should emphasize, will be done in a manner in which we leave it in a, what we call a standby or mothball condition. It's not to be abandoned in place and surplused off and all because all of us in NASA management are confident that many of

these very unique and important facilities, people will be coming back to them to do work in them, when the space program reaches the point when they are needed.

This will be, of course, a massive and challenging difficult job. It's about the toughest job in management on all of you folks under the leadership of Hap [Johnson] and Burt Davis and Dwight [Reilly] and Glenn [Hennings] and others here, to close down these facilities and the Station in an orderly fashion. At the same time we're completing the development and test to qualification of the Titan Centaur Shroud, which I have said before, in writing, and I can only can repeat again, is the most important piece of development and testing that the Center, that the Lewis Center is engaged in. I can't think of a greater demand on people or organizations. We understand that in Washington, and I promised Jim Fletcher and George Low that we would do it.

As far as the people go, the Reductions In Force both this fiscal year, between now and June 30th, and into next fiscal year are generally associated with this time with changes in program content rather than the sort of, everybody equal across the board, as has been NASA policy in reducing force in prior years. This will mean for Lewis a reduction of, I can't give you exact numbers because they're not worked out in that kind of detail yet, but the reviews who have made so far the people associated with nuclear power and propulsion program, which is the single real reduction in the NASA, in the Lewis activities, will mean a reduction in force of around 400 by June 30th, generally 50/50 between here and Cleveland. And another 200 to 300 people by the end of fiscal '74. This reduction in the Lewis staff of some 650, 700 people, I can assure you is by no means the largest part of the majority of the reductions in personnel that NASA will be experiencing next fiscal year. I, to give you just one more little feel for some of these, an impact of some of these number – it's been not a small part of my racing back and forth almost daily to Washington the last week or 10 days in working this problem with the folks in Washington, I did manage to get a recovery of about 145 people from Lewis that would otherwise be added to this.

You will hear in the days and weeks ahead, quite a bit of talk, you'll be engaged in some of this conversation yourself, you'll certainly read it in the newspapers or hear it on the radio about a lot of flack going on in Congress. The Congress and the President are in many ways running on a collision course. It's going to be a very active time between the White House and the Hill this spring. Many things the President is doing, finds it necessary to do, is not going to be favored by various different pieces of Congress. Jim Fletcher was of the view, and I think he's right, that at least in the short term this won't matter that what the President is decided he's going to do will be done in spite of opposition in Congress. You will probably also hear continuing talk, increased talk about other government agencies, DOT or EPA, HEW or others, of making use of both your very exceptional skills and talents and many of our very unique facilities. There's not, I don't want to hold out too much hope here, at least at this point in time because the general feeling I have is that all of the other agencies are cut more than NASA is.

My response to all of this, well what happens, of course, what happened to me a week or few days ago, the same thing that's happening to you now – you suffer a shock that you can't quite believe it, a feeling of pain and anguish, of course, and you lick your wounds

for a day or two. Then you decide that's not very constructive so where do we go from here?

As far as all of you people are concerned and the station is concerned, I and Bernie [Lubarsky] and the others with me, Hap, are completely dedicated to at least two things at this point. One is to do a very first class orderly job of finishing our work here, of the large concern about bringing that Titan Centaur Shroud in. And secondly we're going to be completely dedicated to finding every one of you that wants a job, a good job someplace. I intend to Monday, as soon as I can, to call such people as Tom Payne and Harry Finger and many of my other friends in other agencies in government now that I can tell them what's happening and make your interests and capabilities known to them. And we're going to set up here and in Cleveland a real massive outplacement service for you. The fact that you possess unusual skills and capabilities and experience, I've discovered, is known everywhere throughout the country and Washington and there will be interest in a lot of places of making use of your skills and experience if the people have the ability to expand their staffs.

My own sort of philosophical views here now that I think back on all of this was really that I think that I recognize now, I knew it at the time without knowing I really knew it, I guess, that was I think nuclear reactor power for space really disappeared about four years ago when Tom Payne opted for the shuttle instead of the space station when he was told he could only have one of the two. Plum Brook was really created and made a station for, and had done a fine job, for a space program that simply didn't materialize at a rate that permits it to be sustained now. The space program simply has slipped down stream in point of time. It's been my observation, I think in looking back on the hard spots that in every change and lots of people have been through lots of changes. And every change of this sort for all of you, almost always there's opportunity buried someplace given the time and the wisdom to seize it. And I feel fairly confident in this significant change over the next 18 months for all you there is opportunity buried someplace. And I would only point out at this point that you do have an intact organization, a strong and capable and a very concerned organization working for you. I found concern for properly tending to the people of the organization to be foremost in the minds of Jim Fletcher, George Low, Dick McCurdy, and myself and all of us here, of course.

Timing of this release, at 12:00PM today, George Low is telling this to Congressman Mosher. I was anxious to tell you the same time that the Congressman was hearing it. I will be leaving here in a few minutes and going back and telling the folks in Cleveland about this, so you're the first to hear. There will, we will be telling some of our contractors management about, there are many contract terminations in this and other programs throughout NASA. Contractor management will be informed at 1:00PM today but that will be for management information. There will be a press release coming out of Washington and out of here and Cleveland at 4:00PM this afternoon. All of this information is restricted to government employees, except for notifying contractor management at 1:00PM, it's restricted to government employees between now and 4:00PM. At 4:00PM a document becomes a public document in Washington that's got what I've told you and all the rest of NASA's program things in it. No doubt when many of you get back to your desk, your phones will start to ring and people will be asking you what was the meeting here for and what's going to happen and so forth. I'll have to ask

you to tell them... - Well, yeah, we always have meetings but it was nothing of particular concern to them at that time or something. And you understand.

(murmuring of the crowd)

And that you understand that an announcement will be made in Washington at 4:00PM. So you've got to kind of handle it in some such way that this is for your information till 4:00PM and that you understand that there'll be some announcement coming out of Washington at 4:00PM this afternoon. After 4:00PM, of course it does become public.

That's about all I can say. That's all I know. That's all I can say. I've told you everything that I know up to this time. Probably a little bit more than I should have about some things. I don't feel that there's any more questions that I could answer at time. I'll be working very closely with Hap through today and in the days and weeks ahead. He'll be able to handle all of your concerns and questions in the manner exactly as well as I could and be able to speak for me at every point.certainly and Bernie too, all of us are going to make it our business now, instead of tending to the nuclear program, we're going to be tending to handling the closedown of the station and the work remaining and taking care of all of you. We're going to make that our main business here.

So thanks for your attention and coming here and I'll be seeing all of you, I know, again in the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you.

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