

beyond that, in the latter part of the 1970's, the more distant planets with the opportunities that open up in the 1977 period.

Many of these missions will require us to develop the kinds of increased capability that nuclear propulsion can give us.

Senator CANNON. Well, now, you indicate here in your Administrative Operations account that you will have to eliminate a number of positions by attrition, and with a small number of RIF's. What do you foresee in the future in that area? In other words, when you get back to this level, is this the level that you are likely to want to proceed, in the future, based on your present thinking?

Dr. PAINE. Our present thinking, and it is of a somewhat preliminary nature, is that the current level is an appropriate level for perhaps the next year or so with reduced requirements that we see in the 1970 period. At the same time, if the United States is to forge ahead and to take a leading position in space—an objective which we have frequently enunciated in the past but which with many other economic and fiscal pressures we have been forced perhaps to cut back on somewhat—if indeed we move ahead we would expect to see some modest increase in the AO level.

Senator CANNON. Well, now, with this AO level for the coming year, will this permit you to retain the necessary scientists and technicians and the necessary skills on hand under the future anticipated level of funding?

Dr. PAINE. It does this in an extremely austere way, Senator Cannon. There is very little margin here but we believe that this is a minimum acceptable level to us.

PROSPECTS FOR NASA FUNDING NEXT YEAR

Senator CANNON. Do you have any kind of feel for the prospects for NASA's funds next year?

Dr. PAINE. No, sir, I do not. It is my hope and my belief that the Nation will indeed want to proceed on with its aeronautics and space program, and we are making every possible effort to see that the best possible case for this will be put before the Nation.

Senator CANNON. In your preliminary planning do you anticipate building a program at about the same level as this year's, that is, independent from the Apollo?

Dr. PAINE. In our present stage of our planning, Senator Cannon, we are looking at a very wide range of alternatives, including a somewhat reduced figure over this year and including some very substantially increased levels, and we are trying at the present time to carry forward our planning that will allow us to make the best possible program mix when we have a better idea as to what can be achieved at these different levels of funding.

SPACE OBJECTIVES CHANGE

Mr. WEBB. Senator Cannon, could I comment just a moment on this situation——

Senator CANNON. Sure.

Mr. WEBB (continuing). Since it has been important to President Johnson and to me to explore the situation as we have considered how to get continuity and stability in this important program.