



NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20546

Neil Armstrong

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

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Mr. George M. Low
Manager
Apollo Spacecraft Program
NASA Manned Spacecraft Center
Houston, Texas 77058

Dear George:

It has come to my attention that you have asked someone outside of NASA to advise you on what the manned lunar landing astronauts might say when they touch down on the Moon's surface. This disturbs me for several reasons.

The Agency has solicited from within NASA any suggestions on what materials and artifacts might be carried to the surface of the Moon on that historic first flight. But we have not solicited comment or suggestions on what the astronauts might say. Not only do I personally feel that we ought not to coach the astronauts, but I feel it would be damaging for the word to get out that we were soliciting comment. The ultimate decision on what the astronauts will carry is vested in a committee set up by the Administrator; the committee will not, nor will the Agency by any other means suggest remarks by the astronauts.

Frank Borman solicited a suggestion from me on what would be appropriate for Christmas Eve. I felt--and my feeling still stands--that his reading from the Bible would be diminished in the eyes of the public if it were thought that NASA pre-planned such a thing. I declined both officially and personally to suggest words to him despite the fact that I had some ideas. I believed then

and I believe the same is true of the Apollo 11 crew that the truest emotion at the historic moment is what the explorer feels within himself not for the astronauts to be coached before they leave or to carry a prepared text in their hip pockets.

The Lunar Artifacts Committee, chaired by Willis Shapley, asked that all elements of NASA consider what might be carried on Apollo 11. I know that General Phillips has properly reiterated the request by asking all elements of Manned Flight to suggest things, but it was not the desire or intent of the committee to broaden the scope of the solicitation to verbal reactions.

There may be some who are concerned that some dramatic utterance may not be emitted by the first astronaut who touches the lunar surface. I don't share that concern. Others believe a poet ought to go to the Moon. Columbus wasn't a poet and he didn't have a prepared text, but his words were pretty dramatic to me. When he saw the Canary Islands he wrote, "I landed and saw people running around naked, some very green trees, much water, and many fruits."

Two hundred years before Apollo 8, Captain James Cook recorded while watching the transit of Venus over the sun's disk, "We very distinctly saw an atmosphere or dusky shade around the body of the planet."

Meriwether Lewis, travelling with William Clark, recorded, "Great joy in camp. We are in view of the ocean, this great Pacific Ocean which we have been so long anxious to see, and the roaring (sic) or noise made by the waves brakeing (sic) on the rocky (sic) shore may be heard distinctly."

Peary was simply too tired to say anything in 1909 when he reached the North Pole. He went to sleep. The next day he recorded in a diary, "The pole at last. The

prize of three centuries. I cannot bring myself to realize it. It seems all so simple and commonplace."

The words of these great explorers tell us something of the men who explore and it is my hope that Neil Armstrong or Buzz Aldrin will tell us what they see and think and nothing that we feel they should say.

I have often been asked if NASA indeed plans to suggest comments to the astronauts. My answer on behalf of NASA is "no."

I'd appreciate your comments.

Regards,

Julian Scheer
Assistant Administrator
for Public Affairs

cc: Neil Armstrong
Mike Collins
Buzz Aldrin