

Re: Cassini: its cost and purpose?

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I'd like to address the idea that money spent on space exploration (or many other govt. programs) is wasted or lost.

First a disclaimer: I worked on the Cassini attitude control electronics for six+ years and was holding my breath along with a lot of others during orbit insertion.

I've been at JPL for over twenty years, and AFAIK we have never stuffed a nosecone full of bricks of 20 \$ bills and launched them into space! The funds spent on programs like this circulates in the economy right here on earth. For my part, it has gone for rent, food, car repairs, and the myriad other expenses a life requires. The amount spent on materials and services has benefited many businesses, thereby providing jobs to others so they can purchase additional goods and services. The actual value of the materials launched away from the Earth is a trivial amount of the total.

This can be said about nearly all of the things the government uses public funds for. I agree that many programs are unnecessary or even counter productive, that there is great waste and fraud, and that there are even deliberate inefficiencies built into them. The basic aim is to keep a high enough percentage of the population employed (usefully or not) to enable our society to function. The continued circulation of wealth is as important to it, as that of your blood is to you. The only money that is truly going to waste, is that not being used. The bucks stuffed in your mattress for example, are only a potential benefit to you or others until it is used.

However, the main point that many of us have been debating is this. Are there better things to spend an amount of money on than space exploration. I agree that there are many worthwhile things that would provide more immediate benefit to people than our present example, Cassini. There are also a lot more very expensive things that provide less benefit, but are still funded. Examples: Bogus research grants to support a predetermined political viewpoint. Vastly expensive military systems that are never used, or are just impractical. Highways to nowhere, and all other forms of that lovely, inclusive word, PORK! Now many would consider Cassini to be a very juicy bit of pork to be trimmed. Here, I disagree. Cassini, and other forms of scientific exploration DO provide a benefit in increased knowlege about the universe we live in. Any direct benefit to people from that may not be

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apparent for some time. As Ben Franklin said when questioned about the worth of his experiments with electricity, "of what use is a newborn babe?" It seemed silly to people of the time, but is crucial to our world today. We can't predict where science will lead us, or what information might turn out to be useful. Also, technologies developed for "useless" things like Cassini are already being applied in other ways. The mapping spectrometer has been further developed for medical imaging here on earth for example. The benefits are not just from the science data returned.

There are many things that should be complained about, trimmed, or cancelled, before going after things that are benefitting mankind through inspiration, knowledge returned, technologies developed, and pride in doing something difficult, or to the naysayers, impossible!

Jeff Schroeder

Very proud to be doing something worthwhile with my life. And lucky!!

"Mean Mr Mustard" <macusr023@yahoo.com> wrote in message news:ef808dff.0407081634.7776122@posting.google.com...
> "Jon Kickerston" <none@nospam.com> wrote in message news:<JDyFc.23901\$bs4.5432@newsread3.news.atl.earthlink.net>...
> > 1) What has (or will) this entire Cassini project cost when everything is
> > completed?
>
> Billions the US doesn't have
>
> > 2) Now this is tough for me: its purpose?
>
> The same purpose as every other bullshit government program: a hand
> out to special interest groups.
>
>
> > The point of the aforementioned, at least in my mind, is the question of why
> > probably millions are being spent on this mission to find out the
> > composition of clouds, their rotation, etc. and maybe something more about
> > Titan, when such studies could have been better conducted here for a
> more
> > useful purpose.
>
> The government should not be in the business of funding such studies
> or any other research. It is a complete 180 from what the founding
> fathers intended ... ie no taxation without representation. Sure we
> get pretty pictures, but that's about it (oh, except that we also
> increase the national debt).
>
> Unfortunately, for the space-geek community the United States is broke
> ... I mean piss poor, so they will have to find some other

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- > *"sugar-daddy" to pay for those pretty pictures. Maybe China, maybe*
- > *the EU? Probably neither since they realize space "exploration" is*
- > *basically flushing money down the toilet.*