

Re: Barack Obama Pits Space Explorers Against School Children

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On 4 Dec, 17:10, Eric Chomko <pne.cho...@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

You keep using that line as your affirmation and see how the number of loons keeps growing.

Not very fast. The biggest problem is that the loon/useful poster ratio has increased dramatically here over the past few years.

Yes and your number of posts has been increasing, so by your own admission you've been adding to the fodder.

Too bad your blog sucks, as you tend to spend a lot of time here rather than there.– Hide quoted text –

There are basically two kinds of postings to which one might take exception to on those grounds. The first of these are those whose postings defy known scientific laws and established facts. Strangely enough Rand seems to attack these very little.

The second type is someone like myself who is scientifically orthodox but whose political beliefs and moral values he takes exception to. I think that space colonies in the form in which they seem to be imagined by certain people are immoral, impractical and dangerous.

If you look at space from an orthodox scientific/economic perspective one or two things become clear. The first of these is that there is no magic formula to lower costs. If there were someone would now be building a cheap LEO reusable vehicle. Orthodox economics can help to reduce costs, but there will be no dramatic breakthrough. As I have previously said. If Rand has the magic formula why is he not approaching merchant banks?

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The second fact is that unless there is a dramatic breakthrough of some nature we are going to carry on doing similar sorts of activities to what we are doing now. In fact the main "breakthrough" if you could call it that appears to be in the shape of lighter more capable spacecraft. Ares, even if it works, is going to do no more than Saturn and have a similar cost structure. Does Ares exist? This is yet another habit Rand has of denying things that everyone else knows are true.

The third fact is that space now needs to be sold to a skeptical public. This is really what this thread is about. The public, through Barak Obama is asking this question. What does space mean for the man in the street? What will I get out of Mars? If your answer is that existentiakl risks will be countered by space colonies, the obvious reply is "I want to know how you are reducing existential risk for me on Earth. I don't want to hear about space. Indeed space is to me an indication that you are not looking after my interests properly."

If you were to package it up in terms of sunshields, space solar power or asteroid threat I might (just) go along with it.

The fourth fact is that for space not to simply be a continuation of small scientific probes there has to be a major breakthrough. That breakthrough must come in the form of using the resources of space.

The fifth fact is that robotics is at a point where human manual dexterity will be demonstrated in the next 10 years if not the next 5. Back to the Moon/Mars look pretty sick on this basis.

Personally I would say that anyone who did NOT accept these 5 points was possibly not looney but out of touch with the way that modern science is advancing.

The irony is is that when people propose things like antigravity they do not get hauled up. Looney of course is what is generally accepted as being the facts. If the possibility of breakthroughs is denied then we might as well close up now.

– Ian Parker

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