

LETTERS...

about those "Billions". That money is being spent in this country for honest and basically altruistic purposes. It is maintaining hard earned skills, developing new technologies and perspectives which will help our nation in a multitude of ways. For such purposes I gladly pay taxes.

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To The Publisher:

The "Village View" of a week or so ago discussed the benefits which the nation has received from NASA programs for the exploration of near space, the moon and part of our planetary system. The column opened and closed with references to the "billions" that had been spent—implying that the money spent was an especially significant part of total concept. Missing from the discussion was a yardstick by which to compare that money with other large sums spent annually by the government and by the people.

The last and final "moon shot" cost about five hundred million dollars (half a billion). This is too much money for the average person to evaluate. How much is half a billion? Well, if you had a large (very large) pile of dollar bills and if you were able to count one dollar a second—one, two, three, four—and you counted eight hours a day, forty hours a week, and if you started counting when you were ten (10) years old and took no vacations, you would get to five hundred million (half a billion) when you were ninety (90) years old (give or take a couple of years). Now large as that five hundred million is, when the moon program was at its spending peak, it cost ten (10) times that amount each year. It cost five BILLION dollars (\$5,000,000,000.00) a year for "Project Apollo". (Incidentally, Apollo is the SUN god—a handsome young man. The MOON program should have logically been called "Project Artemis" after the MOON godDESS, but was not for fairly obvious political image reasons.) Now five BILLION dollars should be considered in the frame of reference of some of the other money spent annually in this country. Five BILLION dollars is about the kind of money spent each year in this country on cosmetics! Think about that! And it's about the kind of money that is spent each year at the pari-mutual windows. It is less than half the money spent annually on booze and cigarettes. And it is about one quarter (1/4) the twenty BILLION that is bet illegally each year in this country. (That's the Mafia "handle".)

The five BILLION spent by NASA at its peak spending years was only one eighteenth (1/18) the ninety (90) BILLION spent by the Department of Defense and only one twenty-fourth (1/24) the one hundred and twenty BILLION spent by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Today, NASA has a much smaller budget which is about three (3) billion. That's about the kind of money we are giving away this year to Israel—a country whose biggest export—in dollars—is polished diamonds.

Now I recognize that national morale is important. Placing a little bet never hurt anyone (much) and might even "be good for the soul" as my Irish friends tell me. And we all know (from intensive national advertising) that "a diamond is forever". I suppose that is good for morale too. But it bothers me to feed the Mafia and it helps my morale to keep warm in winter. (I burn oil.)

Looking at the money that is being spent by NASA this year in the perspective of some of the above reference points, I feel much better