

THE LUNA PROJECT

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John Huey, Editor-in-Chief

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Dear sir :

The piece which you ran on-line today under the title "The Silly Science of Newt Gingrich" shows nothing more clearly than that your commentator, Jeffery Kluger, is sillier than the candidate. In fact he seems to have gotten everything he knows about space off the back of a cereal box. What else could explain his ignorance of the fact that some of the largest satellites ever flown were nothing but mirrors? Many of your readers will remember the orbiting "Echo" balloons (primarily intended to reflect radio waves) which were by far the most visible signs of the early Space Age. And harnessing the power of the Sun in space to Earthly uses is no fantasy. Even now, the Solaren Corporation has a contract with Pacific Gas and Electric to deliver hundreds of megawatts from an orbiting power station, beginning in 2015.

It is certainly true that a market for the rare light isotope of helium is purely notional today, and obtaining it from the lunar surface would be no small job. On the other hand, some of the most valuable minerals on Earth actually come from space. Geologists now recognize formations such as Sudbury and Vredefort as ancient meteor craters. These are, of course, principal sources of heavy metals vital to industry, notably nickel and platinum. On the thoroughly-cratered Moon, meteoritic debris can be collected from the powdery soil with a simple magnetic rake, used for the same purpose on this planet since the 1920s. 3-D printing and other techniques developed by Earth industry make it possible to use more plentiful constituents, such as aluminum and titanium, to build much of the equipment needed, saving the cost of transporting it. Even human life can be supported : metals refining liberates copious oxygen, and we know from the *Apollo* quarantine experiments that plants will grow in lunar soil.

I am no supporter of Mr. Gingrich, but I am a supporter of space development, as are many other Americans. Just ask the question of where the resources will be found to support future economic growth, especially in today's poor countries. The present world situation shows that they cannot come from the Earth, so they must perforce come from the sky.

The Stars Are Ours!

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