

## Chapter VI

# A Maturing Program

### Competing Issues

**T**he first Apollo missions were the climax of a race to restore American prestige regarded as lost as a result of the initial Soviet space successes. The remaining Apollo missions, all carrying ALSEPs powered on the Moon by SNAP-27s, represented a winding down of the nation's space program. Spectacular pictures from the last Apollo missions provided final glimpses of America's end game in the manned race to the Moon. Even before this, however, the country was moving into a period when the focus that had been placed on the space program was shifting to other issues.

In a ticker tape parade in New York City honoring the Apollo 14 astronauts there was evidence of conflicting public priorities. A sign held up along the parade route read, "White astronauts fly to the moon while black children die in welfare hotels." Demonstrators near the steps of the city hall competed with the mayor's remarks by chanting, "Crumbs for the children, millions for the moon."<sup>1</sup> One industry spokesman saw mounting criticism of the defense establishment affecting technology in general. Writing in a space journal, he said:

All these [dissenting] groups focus their criticism on the defense establishment and the "military-industrial complex." They have increasingly included basic science and fundamental technological pursuits in their criticism.<sup>2</sup>

The NASA budget which stood at \$5.2 billion in Fiscal Year 1965, had been pared to below \$3.3 billion in Fiscal Year 1971, while social programs got \$77.2 billion that year, and defense \$73.5 billion.<sup>3</sup>

In the first five years of the decade of the 1970s, the RTG program participated in seven successful space missions, equalling the number of successful missions the program had known in the previous ten years, which began when the first SNAP-3A flew on a Navy Transit satellite. Two other missions during that decade, Nimbus-B-1 and Apollo 13, were aborted. Through this string of successes the program benefited from its own technical momentum