

Star Wars - the illusory umbrella

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...the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophes.

Albert Einstein

Canada's stand on the Star Wars (or the Space Defense Initiative) has been ambivalent at best. Depending on who in the Mulroney government you talk to, Canada either supports SDI research wholeheartedly or is simply thinking about getting involved. Recently Joe Clark, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated he wanted to hear what Canadians had to say on this important issue. Canada should not become involved in any aspect of SDI research. Instead it should exhort both the United States and the Soviet Union to agree to a moratorium on space weapons research.

Support for SDI is based on the premise that it is possible to place in space a leak proof nuclear umbrella. It is highly unlikely, however, that such a system can be designed and im-

plemented. Assuming the U.S. was able to come up with a feasible design the chances of it actually being put in place are slim. The Soviet Union is not going to idly stand by and watch

Of course the argument that will immediately come to mind is something I have just said - namely that the Soviets may already have started their own research. This is one more reason why



NATO gain the nuclear advantage. It is either going to start its own research into SDI, something many believe to already be the case, or choose one of several other options. If they are unable to design a similar system that is just as effective the Soviets have several choices. One is to launch a pre-emptive first strike. Another is to drastically increase their nuclear arsenal so they can literally flood the skies with missiles, thereby reducing the effectiveness of a space based defence system. They could also launch a number of dummy missiles without nuclear warheads to overload the system.

Canada should push for a moratorium on this kind of research. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are threatening to escalate the arms race by taking nuclear war into space. As Hans Beite, Nobel Laureate, said -SDI threatens "a big new escalation" in the arms race, an escalation we can ill-afford in any arms race already out of control.

The world economy is in poor shape. SDI will only help to make it worse. Granted the research and eventual development of the weapons systems will create some jobs, but if the money put into this program was to be invested in civilian projects there would be a

greater number of jobs created. Research bears this out. In addition, money will have to be taken from already strapped areas of the budgets of those nations involved in order to support increased military spending. The only way to avoid such an occurrence would be to cut the money spent on missile research, something no nation is likely to do.

The belief that we can actually develop a leak proof umbrella will most certainly lead to a false sense of security. It will cause NATO leaders to become complacent and lethargic, loathe to spend money on other weapons systems when the public is already crying for reduced military spending. History is full of cases of just this sort of thing happening. SDI could easily become our Maginot Line in space.

One major stumbling block that SDI researchers will encounter is the software, or computer programming, necessary to run the system. This will require millions of lines of code. The chances of this being error free are non-existent — even a simple 30 line pro-

gram never runs the first time. How can such a large system be tested and errors eliminated. Once these one link new errors are going to arise. These won't be eliminated by testing because the testing can't be done.

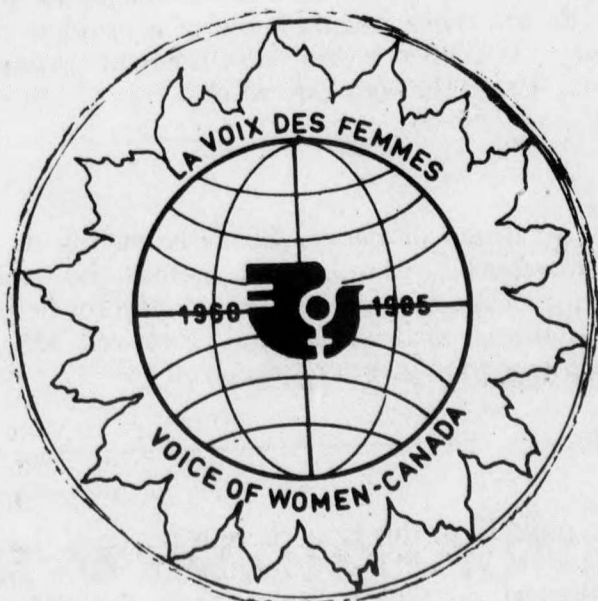
There are legal aspects to this research as well. Canada's involvement could mean our aiding and abetting the U.S. in violating the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty, Outer Space Treaty, Non-Proliferation Treaty, Partial Test Ban Treaty, UN Charter and several UN Declarations. Nations cannot act as if these treaties do not exist.

The final, most frightening aspect of this proposal is the tendency for those involved to begin thinking they can actually win a nuclear war. While MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) is a dangerous defense policy, SDI would be suicidal. There is no way to win nuclear war.

As stated previously Joe Clark is asking for public input. Take advantage of this opportunity and state your opinion on Canada's involvement in SDI research.

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