

# EDITORIAL

## Missiles in vogue

The prospect of a nuclear war has, once again, become a fashionable after-dinner discussion. Most people are calmly tossing around ICBMs and MIRVs and the probability of a nuclear holocaust as if talking about these things in a cavalier fashion somehow mitigates their horror.

U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig, with his comment that he could think of worse things than a nuclear war; Ronald Reagan and his lavish promises for dollars to the defense establishment; and the generally aggressive stance of current U.S. foreign policy remind one of the child who has to put his hand on the stove to convince himself it will hurt.

Policies like these are dangerously destabilizing, and it's easy to understand why the *Journal of Atomic Scientists* has put their doomsday clock closer to the zero hour than ever before.

The scientists are essentially correct - not that there will be a wholesale nuclear confrontation between the super-powers but that there will be a more limited nuclear war, likely within the next decade.

A number of factors contribute to a growing pessimism about our ability to avoid a nuclear war: the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the development of small "tactical nukes," the abandonment of the policy of "Mutually Assured Destruction" (MAD, surely the best acronym ever devised), and the willingness to "think about the unthinkable."

What we have now is a frightening confluence of technical capabilities and political sentiments. In the past, nuclear war was unlikely because it was regarded as all or nothing, war with no victors. Today, nuclear arms are seen as just another in a long line of killing devices: quick and efficient although somewhat messy.

Nuclear weapons have also become relatively cheap: India, Pakistan, Egypt, Israel, Brazil, Argentina, South Korea, and South Africa all either have, or are probably developing, small-scale weapons. Even Libya, that paradigm of radical lunacy, tried to buy a nuclear weapon from China a few years ago.

The increased availability of nuclear weapons and their relatively small size now allows defense planners to plot strategies for "strategic nuclear war." Nuclear wars, they contend, can be won. Given the belief, a confrontation is only a matter of time.

Have these strategists forgotten the lessons of history? No national leader enters a war intent on bleeding his own country white. But wars have a way of escalating. And total commitment in a nuclear war means total destruction.

So whether it will be a few ICBMs lobbed over Europe, a Middle Eastern city annihilated by a crude atom bomb, or a black African army destroyed by tactical nukes, the prospects for the next decade look grim.

Does anyone *still* think Pandora's box can be closed?

Keith Krause

## the Gateway

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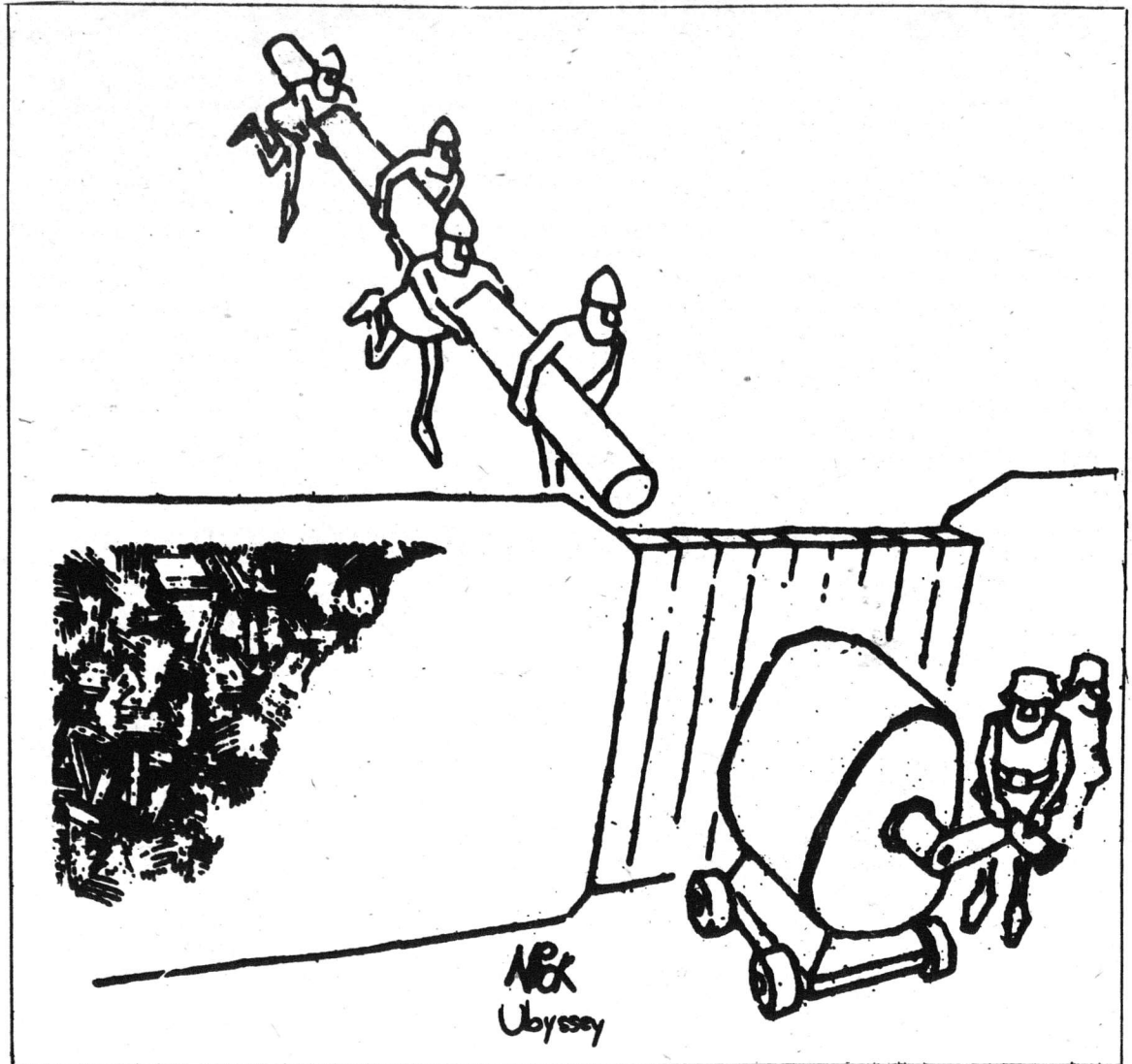
If it happens on campus...it's news to us.



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## ...and put up a parking lot

I heard recently that my roommates in North Garneau received their eviction notices to make way for upcoming Student Games. Though I had heard rumors before, I didn't believe that the authorities would destroy a very important part of our campus life to make room for their expanding egos. Since there seems to have been very little consideration of student approval, I wonder if this is a signal of the continual destruction of our heritage. I would like to add to the students' protests by requesting reconsideration of the future direction concerning campus policy.

The unquestioned reign of King Peter has drifted down to our University planners who feel what is good for their pride is necessarily good for the students. I don't think the celebrated "Games" will benefit the students enough to provide an excuse for the University to create more concrete monstrosities. By ripping down N.G. they are taking away our homes, our yards and our parking spaces to put up a parking lot for someone else and more slum housing. Is this an improvement? Why don't they work on busing and subways instead?

We must stop and consider the price of development, and how it affects our natural surroundings. North Garneau is a community of well-spaced houses in established well-treed lots. The students have good relationships with their neighbors, and learn responsibility by living on their own. The age of the houses surrounding the campus gives the University a sense of history. We live in a country known for its space and wealth, so why should we join the rat race by wanting to put up concrete rabbit hutches is a mystery to me.

Mass society and its characteristic towers of concrete are accompanied by psychological problems in the people. There must be a correlation of poor grades and instability to living conditions. Packing people into

small-sized room high rises might solve the space problem but it deprives them of any relationship to Nature.

To be surrounded by concrete walls and pressure and University all day, to return home to a small, impersonal, noisy room cannot be beneficial to a person's health. North Garneau only benefits a small percentage of students at a time, but should it be taken away forever? We should have the alternatives allowed to us in order to live a full and psychologically-happy life.

North Garneau is not a piece of land to be abused by people who only look at paper values. It is a symbol of all the people who have

come to appreciate community citizenship, heritage and the need for privacy. We are not an impoverished one that needs to uproot its past in order to survive. We do not need to ruin our reputation by allowing people whose taste is nouveau riche to ruin what has survived the test of time.

If we have any pride in the spirit and look of our campus we will protest to be allowed to reconsider the worth of new developments. Must we reach the point where we can't turn back because the people who propel us think bigger is better?

Sharon Domier  
Tokyo, Japan

## But coal's even worse!

I am writing to reply to the letter from Brian Cohen (*Gateway*, February 10, 1981). He rejects the belief of Mr. Morewood that "a press cover-up is ludicrous." (*Gateway*, January 29, 1981). I happen to agree with Mr. Morewood.

In fact, the press tends to blow minor malfunctions at nuclear power plants way out of proportion. The press has helped to turn people against one of the safest energy sources. Now, coal, which is far more dangerous than nuclear power, is the favored energy source. Coal causes acid rain and killer fogs, which can make Three Mile Island look very minor.

The probably reason why the press has not covered its front pages with stories about infant deaths caused by Three Mile Island is because of lack of evidence that the infant deaths were caused by radiation. The probable cause of the increase in infant deaths was not an amount of radiation which is equivalent to that of a typical X-ray, but the panic which occurred during the incident. However, I find it interesting that the article about the alleged coverup (*Gateway*,

January 13, 1981) did not mention the number of infant deaths which would normally be expected. From the information in the article, it is not possible to determine if the increase in infant deaths is or is not a normal fluctuation.

It would be foolish to deny that there is no possibility of an unknown disease which may be caused by nuclear power, for the same reason that we do not know that an unknown disease could not be caused by solar power, health foods, or anything and everything in the real world. Mr. Cohen asked, "Should we be willing to take such risks in the first place?" Can we even escape such risks?

Even though I consider the answer to be obvious, for people who are prejudiced against nuclear power and for anyone else, to whom the answer is not obvious, the answer is "No."

To paraphrase Mr. Cohen, it would be nice to imagine such a safe world. However, if nuclear power is banned in an attempt to create such a world, there is overwhelming evidence that such an attempt will fail.

James R. Yushchynsky  
Science II