

IV. STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVES

A. Star Wars

It appeared that less than half of the participants in each of the general public groups, while almost all of the upscale participants, had heard of the "Star Wars" plans. The general impression of the plans seemed to be that it was a "warning system" designed to give early indication of and subsequently destroy enemy missiles. It was also generally agreed that the plans are only being researched and are 20 years away from implementation.

There was a mixture of opinion on whether Star Wars was a good or bad idea; however, it appeared that the general view was slightly more positive than negative. Those who favoured the Star Wars plans considered it a step towards disarmament and the prevention of war. Some participants also suggested that Star Wars could offer economic benefits, e.g. jobs, and a sense of security for Canada.

Participants who were unfavourable towards Star Wars described it as an "escalation" of the arms race and likely to produce the development of a counterweapon by the Soviets. It was also mentioned that the cost for Star Wars would be prohibitive and there would be no control of missiles shot in space and subsequently falling to earth.

Overall the participants believed there was nothing wrong with developing and discussing the Star Wars plans prior to the next round of talks in Geneva; some even suggested that the talks may be aided by the increased pressure the Soviets might feel as a result of the Star Wars plan. There were a few participants who felt the Star Wars plans would antagonize the talks and be viewed as exacerbating the arms race.