

Reagan's delusions on Star Wars are killing arms control process

Haven't we been subjected enough to Ronald Reagan's rhetorical simplicity? US Secretary of State George Shultz, in a discussion with External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, once said that Ronald Reagan is a man of very few ideas, but the concepts he does hold he maintains obsessively. One of these "ideas" is Star Wars, the Reagan administration plan to create an exotic, high-tech, space-based defence that will render nuclear missiles obsolete. Since its inception, Star Wars has achieved just the opposite, as the programme continually impedes on the superpower arms control process. Ironically, the prima facie core objective of peace activists and Reagan seems to be the same: to eliminate nuclear weapons forever and establish a permanent global peace.

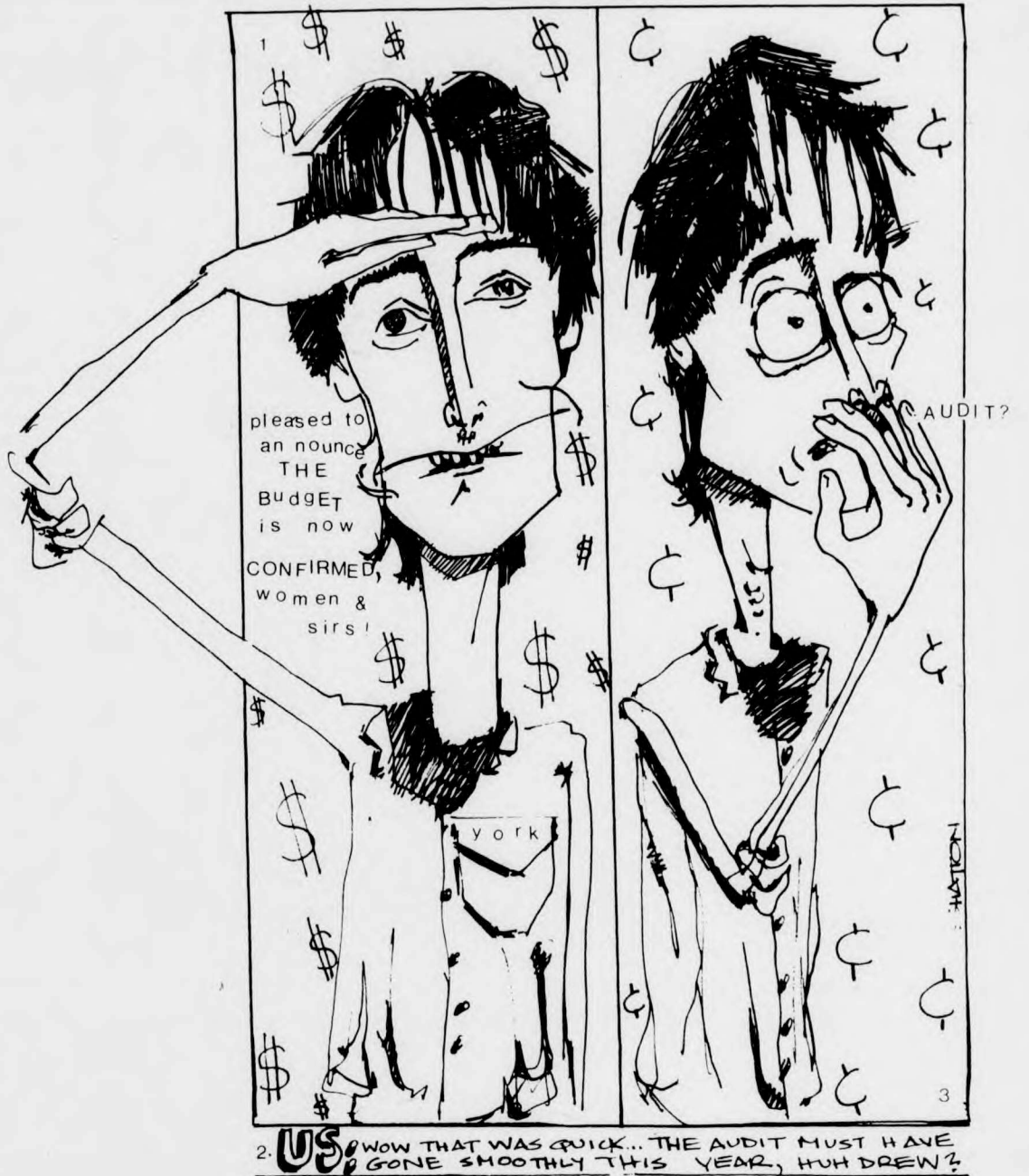
Complete disarmament, unfortunately, is an impossible goal in the real world of power politics. This, however, does not preclude the efficacy of constructive arms control. Yet Star Wars continues to hang over negotiations like a guillotine ready to fall. In Reykjavik in 1986, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev were close to a sweeping arms reduction treaty, only to have Star Wars scuttle the process. Even though a superpower summit now seems a strong possibility, the eventual elimination of medium and short-range missiles on both sides will just barely reduce existing nuclear stockpiles. In reality, comprehensive strategic arms control will not occur without US concessions over Star Wars.

For some reason, the US has failed to learn from the nuclear age's past lessons. In 1972, in perhaps the finest achievement of superpower arms control cooperation, the two parties signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). By restricting both sides to two land-based defense systems, the treaty explicitly recognized the destabilizing potential in developing such shields in a nuclear arms race. Defense systems do not make nuclear weapons obsolete, they make them more usable. In a fascinating example of arcane legal tap-dancing, the US has reinterpreted the ABM Treaty to exclude Star Wars from its prohibitive clutches. In reality, the Reagan administration's new interpretation of the ABM Treaty is a complete fallacy.

Hardly surprising since Star Wars is built on fantasy. Last year, York University was treated to a lecture by a Queen's professor of computer science who forcefully dismissed the feasibility of the system. To operate successfully, Star Wars must have a thoroughly reliable computer software system to isolate and pinpoint incoming missiles. According to Professor David L. Parnas, "Despite thorough testing, no software system can be proven reliable until it is actually put into practise." And still, the administration is committed to spending billions of dollars on a theoretical defence system which, in a crisis situation, might not even work. Moreover, military strategists contend that the Soviet Union can easily overcome an "operational" Star Wars system by using relatively inexpensive cruise missiles and bolstering their current nuclear stockpile.

Star Wars, as a major component of American defence spending, has become entrenched in Washington's budgetary mess which arguably precipitated last week's shocking stock market crash. In just one week, over half a trillion dollars disappeared from the American economy as stock exchanges throughout the US suffered record losses. With many analysts citing the budget deficit as a major cause of the crash, the US government must now start contemplating ways to sharply reduce current defence spending. Isn't it time for Reagan to sacrifice his beloved Star Wars programme, especially when it can still be used as a key bargaining chip to induce the Soviets into entering a comprehensive arms control agreement?

From October 24-31, Global Disarmament Week is being commemorated with a peace march slated for this weekend, but as prominent political scientist Hans Morgenthau once stated, once the genie of nuclear power has been released, it can never be put back into the bottle. Star Wars, though, remains in its formative stages. Its devastating implications can still be capped. Protestors should discard emotional appeals for unilateral disarmament and centre their attention on arms control's greatest foe: Star Wars. Meanwhile, President Reagan is probably incapable of adjusting his thinking to come to this realization. Yet with an election year looming in the US, we can only hope that the next White House incumbent will relieve us of Ronnie's delirious fantasy.



LETTERS

We will publish, space permitting, letters under 250 words. They must be typed, triple-spaced, accompanied by writer's name and phone number. We may edit for length. Libellous material will be rejected. Deliver to 111 Central Square during business hours.

Excalibur in strike coverage

Dear Editor,

I am writing to help fill in some of the holes in your coverage of the YUSA strike. *Excalibur* coverage seemed to turn a blind eye to student support for the actions of our clerical and support staff.

Student supporters were either invisible, or portrayed as 'strikers,' in most of your articles on the strike. The York administration, YUSA, and the commercial press were quite aware of our existence. So were the 2,500 students who signed our petition to President Arthurs, expressing their support for YUSA's demands for equal pay for work of equal value, better training, better health and safety standards and better pensions. Why didn't the *Excalibur* know we were there?

In your October 15 coverage of the CYSF rally against the strike you do note that "some students supporting YUSA were also present." However, you then go on to suggest that "angry words were exchanged between students and workers." YUSA members did not participate in this rally. Student supporters spoke to other students at this rally about why they should not use the bookstore or library when it was opened with strikebreakers. At times, pro-management and pro-staff students expressed their opinions in chants—very normal at a "rally."

In your October 22 article you mention that "strikers did stand in front of the bookstore urging students not to buy their books until the strike was settled." In reality we were students talking to fellow students, not "strikers." Not exactly investigative journalism on your part!

We supported the YUSA members in their strike action because of the

issues. Many of the student supporters were women, and we understood that YUSA's demands will be our demands when we are in the workforce. Some of us are former union members or mature students, with enough work experience to understand why a union membership occasionally says, "enough is enough," and walks out. We wanted students to realize the seriousness of the decision to steal a striker's job. We urged students not to become part of the Administration's plan to defeat the union by running the bookstore and library on a "business as usual" basis.

Students were inconvenienced by the strike. Staff went without pay for 16 days, and in the longer term we also will be affected by unhealthy working conditions, inadequate training and long line-ups because of understaffing.

York University is a public institution, which should be responsive to the people of Ontario. It must also be answerable to students and employees. I believe it is time for a full public inquiry into labour-management relations at York. There have been five strikes by four (very different) unions in three years. Since 95% of collective agreements in Canada are settled without strikes or lockouts what's the problem here?

There is obviously some "dead wood" and some outdated management styles in the Personnel Department at York. In my opinion, we don't have "labour problems" at York, but "management problems." Students should direct their anger at an Administration which is refusing to deal with problems at the university, and not at the staff, who are all attempting to bring York into the 20th century.

Sincerely,
Leanne MacMillan
Year II, Osgoode Hall

Council ignored in Mac policy

Dear Mr. Editor

As a former member of the McLaughlin College Council, and a concerned student of that college, I would at this time like to voice an opinion on the recent "fiasco" there.

As far as my knowledge goes, the McLaughlin College Council was not involved in the creation of the advisory committee by the master. The creation of such a committee by the master is in my opinion not beneficial to the workings of that college. The committee has no authority to take control of funds destined for the college government, especially when they are not a committee of that government. Although the council was willing to create a similar committee on its own terms, this request was ignored. The committee, composed of an administrative majority, and a few hand-selected students is totally out of line with student government, not to mention a travesty against democratic politics. By no means should a college master have such power, regardless of the problems with the council. A master should instead strive to work with the council in an effort to maintain order.

The very council whose power Professor Lanphier is circumventing had little to do with the problems which he has identified, and has not even been given an opportunity to work these problems out. The problems which have arisen as a result of the master's earlier actions against the council president have already hindered that council's progress, and kept them wary of any future actions from the master's office. Obviously, the duly elected student government should be allowed to control student

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