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from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of issues affecting world peace. The accompanying reprints constitute Reprint Mailing No. 91.

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Up the creek without a paddle

NOTHING could provide a more graphic illustration of the dangerously slapdash nature of the American policy in the Middle East, as described by the Secretary of State, Mr George Shultz, to the Iran-Contra hearings, than the damage to the super-tanker Bridgeton in the Gulf even as he spoke. The reflagged Kuwaiti tanker was one of two under escort by three US Navy ships superbly equipped to cope with attack by submarines (the Gulf is too shallow for them), aircraft (Iran has none to spare), surface vessels, and missiles (not tried). She was holed by a contact mine of the simplest type, designed before the First World War and effective only in shallow water because it has to be anchored to the bottom. Although Saudi Arabian minesweepers had been active in the area before the convoy set sail (proving awareness of the danger), the admiral in charge confessed to surprise. Hence the pictures of the escorts hiding behind the tanker they were supposed to protect for fear of more mines.

The experience of the USS Stark, still limping home after being hit in error by an Iraqi Exocet, and of battered but unbroken tankers similarly struck, suggests that the warships are also more vulnerable to missiles unless their defences work every time. The nearest US minehunters are reported to be on the American east coast; the only ones available to the Americans are the four small Saudi coastal minesweepers. Any reminder that the main element in the Soviet presence in the Gulf, there to look after Russian tankers chartered to Kuwait, happens to be a trio of larger minesweepers would doubtless not be seen as germane in Washington. This is a pity because the two superpowers are for once on the same side, not only in responding to Kuwait's requests for protection but also in supporting the unprecedented UN mandatory ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war, which

neither wants the Ayatollah to win. Also on hand are the French tankers whose fleet was put on alert at the weekend as their diplomatic battle of wills with Iran showed no sign of ending.

The Royal Navy's Armilla Patrol, which has no minesweepers, has merely been "accompanying" British ships as far as Bahrain. But the latest addition to the British tanker-fleet is the Modhi, just reflagged by a Kuwaiti company through its Gibraltar subsidiary and thereby entitled to British protection. So far it is only Britain of the outside powers in the Gulf which has recently experienced signs of a resurgence of Iranian overseas terrorism on its streets. We may soon find out whether Iran regards this reflagging as the "purely commercial and procedural arrangement" of Sir Geoffrey Howe's fond imaginings.

What happens next depends on unpredictable variables. In bewildering contrast to their ostentatious naval build-up, the Americans chose to conclude there was no proof that the Bridgeton's mine was Iranian — the US Secretary of Defence, Mr Caspar Weinberger, is not even sure whether the mine was a mine. But if US sailors are killed, massive forces just outside the Gulf are poised to retaliate against Iran, a response which would on past form be met with revenge by remote control in western Europe — and on western hostages held by Iranian sympathisers in Lebanon. The Ayatollah is in a position to deliver what Colonel Gadafy could only threaten. Fortunately Iran is, unlike Iraq, dependent on seaborne trade, and it is in Tehran's interest to keep the Gulf open. But it seems reckless to trust such precarious logic when one nervous finger, to say nothing of the Ayatollah's "invisible hands," could set off a chain-reaction of incalculable proportions. It's time to go back to the drawing board.

(Laucks Foundation was co-sponsor of a conference held at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, University of California at Santa Barbara, March 6-7, 1987, on THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE AND ARMS CONTROL. The following dialogue took place at the conference and is reprinted from The Center Magazine September/October 1987.)

SDI: INCENTIVE FOR ARMS CONTROL

A DIALOGUE WITH FRANK J. GAFFNEY, JR., DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR FORCES AND ARMS CONTROL POLICY

FRANK J. GAFFNEY, JR.: The Antiballistic Missile Treaty in 1972 was predicated on a presumably shared belief that ballistic-missile-defense (BMD) technologies would not work and that they would not justify expenditures, that is, be cost-effective at the margin. That may have been true in our case, but it is not clear that that has been true for the Soviet Union.

Technologies in the Strategic Defense Initiative may not have the apparent shortcomings of the traditional ballistic-missile-defense technologies. The Soviets know that our SDI technologies can work and are pursuing identical technologies with at least as much vigor.

One of the implied facts — if not explicit understandings — of the ABM Treaty was that there would be a mutual commitment to the proposition that vulnerability was a good thing and that defense was destabilizing and undesirable. For our part, we felt that, having severely limited what was already a dubious technical approach vis-à-vis BMD systems, we would be hard-pressed to justify continued investment in air, civil, and leadership defenses, as well as passive defense of our offensive nuclear forces. The Soviet Union did not buy that proposition. It has continuously expended enormous amounts in each of those areas of

defense, including both traditional and advanced BMD technologies.

Another idea vis-à-vis the ABM Treaty was that limitations on defensive forces would clear the way for reductions of offensive forces from 1972 levels. Our position was that if offensive forces were not significantly reduced within five years after signing the treaty, that would be a threat to our supreme national interest, and we would feel justified in exercising our right to withdraw under the ABM Treaty. We felt that the linkage between constraining defensive forces and reducing offensive forces was that important. Our restraint on defensive forces, however, has not cleared the way for reductions of offensive forces. Offensive-force levels are much higher than before and higher than they need to be.

If the Soviets are presented with incentives to eliminate nuclear forces, they can be prevailed upon to do so. Without those incentives, their commitment to reduce tensions, avoid arms racing, and exercise restraint have been little more than rhetoric.

The SDI provides a powerful incentive to the Soviet Union to contemplate effective strategic arms control. For the first time in fifteen years, sound arms control

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may be more attractive to the Soviets than their current and largely unencumbered effort to acquire a strategically dominant position. The Soviets correctly regard the SDI as something that would alter — if not eliminate — the strategic advantage they have sought for so long: the capability of conducting a first strike against the United States.

The value of the SDI as an incentive to the Soviets to engage in arms control varies in direct proportion to our seriousness about the SDI. We are often told that the “bargaining-chip” mentality is fundamentally antithetical to achieving effective results in arms control; whereas it is, in fact, only logical. The Soviets know that once we identify a system as a “bargaining chip,” congressional interest in it wanes and funds are not forthcoming. The Soviets believe that they can wait out such a program, because it will die of its own weight, and that they will not need to pay any arms-control price. So those who strongly oppose the SDI and believe there could be no better outcome than for us to trade it away really ought to encourage us to pursue it vigorously. The SDI is a credible incentive to the Soviets to come up with a verifiable arms-control agreement that is in our interest.

An SDI-based strategic posture would be much more stable than the one we have today. Thousands of nuclear weapons poised on either side is not by anybody's definition a stable strategic order. It is quite possible, and certainly preferable, to establish a strategic relationship with the Soviet Union that has substantially fewer offensive nuclear forces and more defensive systems. But we can achieve such posture only by pursuing a credible and vigorous SDI program.

Whether one believes we ought to have an arms-control agreement that reduces strategic forces without a strategic defense or an agreement that reduces offensive forces in an effective and verifiable way with a strategic defense as a hedge against the failure, cheating, or violation of an agreement, the SDI should be supported vigorously. If we cannot obtain verifiable and effective arms-control agreements, and have pursued the SDI with the view of achieving its actual deployment, we will have at least hedged our bets. We will have a more robust posture, one that can be sustained, politically and morally, something we might not be able to do if we relied solely on our offensive forces.

JOSE FULCO: I am not a professional in the area of national security; I am a physicist who has some serious questions about the SDI program.

An arms-control agreement that would reduce offen-

sive nuclear forces in a mutually agreeable and verifiable manner and would establish defensive systems is a good goal for the United States, the Soviet Union, and the rest of the world. However, I believe that if we keep offensive forces, it is because we would not completely trust our defenses. If we thought otherwise, retaining offensive forces would not be in our proposal. We say offensive forces will help deterrence. But deterrence means that somehow we are willing to accept some level of damage in a nuclear exchange. What is an acceptable level? If it is zero, then offensive weapons would serve no real purpose.

The defensive system of each side will not be identical, because the weapons systems of each side are not identical. The requirements of protection for each side, therefore, will be different. What is an acceptable level of offensive weapons? If it is zero, then defensive systems would serve no real purpose.

How will technical modifications of each side's defensive systems affect the other side?

How will we convince the Soviets we will never use our strategic defenses — which they believe will be better than theirs — as a shield that would allow us to launch a successful first strike against them?

Let us suppose we eliminated all offensive nuclear weapons, how would we know the weapons of a space-based defensive system would not be used in a conventional war? What is the likelihood of defensive systems waging war in space? In a crisis, what guarantee is there that nuclear warheads would not be mounted on defensive weapons and used offensively?

What if the Soviets do not cooperate with us during the transition period leading up to the full deployment of a defensive system? Will they try to destroy our defense components as we are deploying them, that is, when they are most vulnerable?

I believe it will be impossible for the United States and the Soviet Union to reach an agreement establishing a system of offensive and layered defensive forces, because there is no parity in the technologies of the U.S. and Soviet defense systems. The Soviets can build many of the weapons we can build — free-electron lasers, kinetic energy weapons, and so on — but they lack the technologies necessary to make a defensive system — the sensors, the tracking, the information-processing system, the control-and-command management, and so on.

The Strategic Defense Initiative, as it is being carried out today and being proposed for the future does not seem to me to be a positive incentive for arms reductions and negotiations. In fact, the contrary seems to be the case.

GAFFNEY: That offensive forces cannot be reduced in the presence of defenses remains to be shown. Clearly, in the absence of defensive systems, reductions of offensive forces have not taken place.

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FRANK J. GAFFNEY, JR.

Technological parity does not work in a symmetric fashion. The reality of the ABM Treaty was that the Soviets showed their interest in limiting — to the extent they have — their antiballistic missile systems when they faced the prospect of our plan to deploy a defensive system they felt was superior to theirs. The idea that we may never accept a situation in which the Soviets would have an advantage and we would be willing to foreclose our ability to match them is not necessarily a parallel situation when the roles are reversed. I am not even sure it is true in the first case. We hear that when the Soviets have deployed an antisatellite system and we have none that that is the ideal time for us to try to stop our own program and perhaps get some influence over theirs. I am not sure that technological parity works as you have postulated it.

JOHN ERNEST: We who favor arms control are told to support the SDI because it will be an integral part of an overall program for arms control. We heard the same thing with regard to the MX. The United States needed MX missiles to strengthen its position at the negotiating table. We were told to consider the MX not as a bargaining chip, but as a necessary strength in arms negotiations.

That kind of argument leads us to question the commitment of the United States to arms control. Is "arms control" an integral part of an overall U.S. arms-race policy that is not creating a more secure world but is rather driving the development of and justification for many weapons systems?

Advocates of deploying a ballistic-missile-defense system in space justify such a deployment on the basis of Agreed Statement "D" in the ABM Treaty of 1972 with the Soviet Union. That statement says:

"In order to insure fulfillment of the obligation not to deploy ABM systems and their components except as provided in Article III of the [ABM] Treaty, the Parties agree that in the event ABM systems based on other physical principles and including components capable of substituting for ABM interceptor missiles, ABM launchers, or ABM radars are created in the future, specific limitations on such systems and their components would be subject to discussion in accordance with Article XIII and agreement in accordance with Article XIV of the Treaty."

Those articles of the ABM Treaty say, in effect, that we have to define and deal with new ABM systems. Yet some SDI advocates are now saying we can deploy these new systems without any such discussion. So we may well destroy the ABM Treaty as we proceed with the SDI, which, we are told, will advance arms control.

Perhaps, in the search for stability, we need to start looking to methods other than such advanced technologies as the SDI and the arms control process itself which seems to be driving the arms race.

GAFFNEY: The SDI is significant in terms of the incentives we present to the Soviets to negotiate. I would be concerned if you had concluded that the problem with arms control is that weapons systems provide incentives to the Soviets to negotiate. A legitimate grievance about arms control to date is that it has not worked. We are offering incentives to the Soviets that could result in equitable, verifiable, and meaningful arms-control agreements, and we should support, not decry, those incentives.

ERNEST: Will the SDI be put on the bargaining table?

GAFFNEY: We have talked to the Soviets about limitations on the deployment options we believe we have now. That has created precisely the kind of incentive I am talking about. The Soviets can think about that incentive instead of thinking about the alternative, that is, our withdrawing from the ABM Treaty on six months' notice if there is an alternative we wish to take.

DONALD McDONALD: Why are some people, including Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, saying we should start thinking about deploying a space-based defensive system at the same time we are hearing about the serious technical problems of such a system?

There have been significant changes in the SDI: ... the characterization of the SDI as replacing deterrence has been changed to the characterization that it will strengthen deterrence.

RICHARD GARWIN

GAFFNEY: Mr. Weinberger and others are talking about going from our having no defense to having a defense that will ideally support the long-term vision that President Reagan enunciated in his "Star Wars" speech in 1983. Our approach to defense will be orderly and evolutionary. It will lead not to an immediate decision to deploy or even to develop certain systems, but to a decision about identifying, as early as possible, our options for development. If those options prove feasible, there will be decisions about options for deployment of a defensive system that could be available in the nearer term without waiting until we have achieved some notional vision that everything works perfectly fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years hence, at which time — and only at which time — would development and deployment decisions be made.

McDONALD: Then partial development and deployment of a defensive system has some inherent value in itself?

GAFFNEY: I believe it does. The question is, what can we do right now? We are able to evaluate our available technologies and decide whether any of them will be

ready for development in the next several years. Once those technologies are developed, proved to be feasible and viable, and meet certain criteria, we will contemplate the deployment of a defensive system. We are not in a position to deploy today.

FULCO: Will our decision to deploy a defensive system be negotiable with the Soviets?

GAFFNEY: If a decision to deploy is made, it will be made after we negotiate with the Soviets. President Reagan has already made that a matter of record. The President also said that even if the Soviets do not agree with our decision, that would not necessarily constitute a veto for the decision.

RICHARD GARWIN: Mr. Gaffney has a very selective view both of history and of current events when he says a decision about whether to deploy will take place in the future, because both President Reagan and Lieutenant General James Abrahamson — the director of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization — have already said we will deploy.

There have been significant changes in the SDI: A defensive system that allowed human intervention has been changed to one that must be automatic; the assertion that ten million lines of error-free code are essential to the operation of the SDI system, as well as feasible, has been changed to the assertion that they are not essential and feasible; and the characterization of the SDI as replacing deterrence has been changed to the characterization that it will strengthen deterrence.

Mr. Gaffney has said that abandoning counterforce and establishing a defensive system would clear the way for massive reductions in offensive nuclear forces. Yet Simon P. Worden — of the Science Advisor's office and former special assistant to SDIO Director Abrahamson — has said that since 1972 we have had a strategy based on war fighting, not mutual vulnerability. We chose to deploy MIRVs (Multiple Independently-targetable Reentry Vehicles) after 1972. Did we expect that the Soviet Union would not have increased their offensive forces after we had increased ours?

People are trying to make some consistency out of this fantasy of the President's. President Reagan said he is wedded to two things: the SDI and Nancy. We can hardly dispute the second. The first, however, is something all of us have a stake in. That he advanced this idea of a defensive system once does not mean we are stuck with it if it is a bad thing to do.

Mr. Gaffney is addressing a hypothetical SDI that meets the conditions of survivability and cost-effective-

ness at the margin, but not Casper Weinberger's statements that we will not be bound by that, even though it is national policy.

Are you bound by adequate survivability and cost-effectiveness at the margin to consider any system for deployment — even the first phase?

GAFFNEY: Every system we deploy — whether offensive or defensive — meets certain criteria of survivability and cost-effectiveness, without which we could not justify the investment. I do not think that that will be any less true of the first phases of the SDI system, if and when we arrive at the deployment stage of such a system.

*Why do you think your
future would be more
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Or mutual disarmament?*

DAVID COPP

GARWIN: The answer is that we will not be bound by any such criteria. The ABM system of 1972 did not meet any such criteria.

GAFFNEY: We will meet reasonable and sensible criteria. The reasonableness of those definitions and the reasonableness of the definitions whereby we make all of our military investments are central to our decision-making process about defense. When we approach the decision to deploy a defensive system, we will factor in as well as meet those criteria.

MAURICE EISENSTEIN: We can contemplate making decisions about many deployments that would fall

under the ABM Treaty and whose technology does not have to wait for space technology. We are prepared to make a decision about deploying a nationwide antiballistic-missile system. The objective of such a system — which would be limited in terms of the numbers of sites and interceptors — would be to stop an inadvertent launch by the Soviets or some third country.

We can also make a decision in the area of “hard point” defense. However, I am not particularly interested in that kind of defense because it would not accomplish what SDI defenses were originally meant to accomplish, that is, defense of populations and strategic forces.

FRANKLIN A. LONG: I am concerned about the apparent unwillingness on the part of the United States to discuss an SDI defensive system with the Soviets until some indefinite time in the future. If we are to have a defense-dominated world, the transition to that world would have to be a joint effort wherein deployed systems are greatly reduced and deployment of strategic defenses are jointly agreed to.

I am also concerned that we are not discussing and pressing for agreements on strategic nuclear weapons.

GAFFNEY: It is naïve to believe that that transition can only happen on a joint basis.

LONG: Many of your colleagues are asking for that.

GAFFNEY: The Soviets are already in a transition: They are “creeping out” — if not “breaking out” — of the ABM Treaty.

The question is, are we adequately defending the United States with the technical resources that are now available to us? I believe we are not.

As to your concern about discussing reductions of offensive forces with the Soviets, we have been discussing offensive reductions with them for years. We have also been discussing transition, as well as defensive systems, with the Soviets.

LONG: So you contend that we have been negotiating vigorously on reductions of offensive nuclear forces?

GAFFNEY: Unquestionably.

DAVID COPP: You said that the SDI will lead to a more stable future, that deterrence without the SDI is not as stable and secure as it would be with it. Your future world would include both a space-based antiballistic-missile defense and reduced offensive nuclear forces.

But you do not say why that future would be more stable, except that the Soviet Union would be denied a first-strike capability. The Soviet Union, however, is nowhere near getting a first-strike capability. It is unlikely the Soviets will get one in the realistic future, because we have submarine-based missiles, air-launched cruise missiles, and so on. Even if our ground-based missiles were to become totally vulnerable, we would still have these other sources of delivery. The argument that says the Soviet Union would be denied a first-strike capability does not prove that we need the SDI.

Why do you think your future would be more stable and secure than a future of mutual deep reductions of offensive nuclear forces? Or mutual disarmament?

GAFFNEY: If you were to include “mutual, general, and complete disarmament, as well as a reordering of Soviet ideology and priority away from its current ambitions,” I think we all would prefer that scenario.

COPP: I understand that mutual disarmament may be more unlikely than the other option I mentioned.

GAFFNEY: It is not only more unlikely but also, under present circumstances, quite undesirable.

We have a deterrent problem that extends beyond simply deterring Soviet nuclear aggression. We have to deter Soviet chemical capabilities and conventional warfare capabilities. Simply eliminating the nuclear genie would, under present circumstances, greatly disadvantage our allies.

Deterrence that increases uncertainty in the minds of the Soviets about a first-strike capability is more robust and stable than deterrence based simply on the ability to attack the other side.

COPP: But do you think the Soviets are going to forget that we have submarine-based missiles and air-launched missiles?

GAFFNEY: On the contrary. I am concerned about the Soviets’ interest in a first-strike capability because they are pursuing technologies to neutralize our submarines and aircraft. They are threatening all our other systems and working toward a defensive capability that would reduce the retaliatory potential of our forces that would survive a first strike. That cumulative picture — combined with doctrine, strategy, and training — should concern us, as should the possibility that the Soviets may perceive some net benefit to them from conducting a nuclear war. □

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Viewpoint

Recent efforts by the Reagan administration to advance a new interpretation of the 15-year-old Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty should make one thing abundantly clear: this presidency never has had, and never will have, much interest in arms control. The extremists in the administration, and perhaps the President himself, have only one agenda in mind, the dismantling of the entire foundation upon which any future arms agreement must be built.

President Reagan abandoned the US commitment to the SALT II Treaty last year, clearing the way for new deployments of American air-launched cruise missiles in numbers exceeding the limits of the treaty. Now he seeks to move ahead with tests of "Star Wars" weapons and sensors. To do so, he must remove the barriers erected by the ABM Treaty that stand in his way. By any technical standard, the proposed tests are premature and unjustified. Their only purpose seems to be to gut the treaty and lock in SDI before President Reagan leaves office.

With the exception of the President's own arms control advisor, Ambassador Paul Nitze, every expert who was involved in the negotiations on the ABM Treaty has concurred with the view that the treaty bars space-based testing and deployment of ABM systems and components of

any kind—not just those that were under development at the time the treaty was passed in 1972. The interpretation now being offered by the administration suggests that the treaty was not intended to apply to exotic, futuristic systems of the kind now being considered for the Strategic Defense Initiative, but which were not yet on the drawing boards back in the early 1970s.

In short, we are being asked to believe that a treaty whose key function was to ban defenses indefinitely was actually meant to apply only to the technology of the day. It is as if the 55 mile-per-hour speed limit were deemed to apply only to automobiles built before the law was passed, and not to newer models.

The logic of this notion escapes us, just as it has many members of Congress and the press. If the administration were correct in its interpretation, then we might as well not have negotiated the treaty at all. No one could have expected ballistic missile defense technology to stand still while the rest of the world marched ahead.

One can only conclude that Mr. Reagan's real purpose is to torpedo whatever is left of arms control, ensuring that the next administration will have to start from scratch. We must not let that happen, and we are confident that it will not. Once the American people come to understand fully that you can have arms control or Star Wars—but not both—the choice will be obvious.

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The Budget for Motherhood

THE time has come to adopt a more scientific method for selecting presidents. The recent debate over the roles of character versus issues has highlighted the fact that issues actually get short shrift in any presidential campaign. Everyone says that we should discuss the issues, but practically no one does. The reason is that most pronouncements on issues are duller than daytime television. Character is important, and private life does reveal character, but interest in private life inevitably escalates beyond an appropriate level as the chance of distinguishing among candidates on issues diminishes.

The problem with issues pronouncements is that essentially all candidates sound alike. One can confidently predict that presidential hopefuls during the next year will proclaim that they are for a stronger defense, a greater safety net for the underprivileged and the elderly, strong support for farmers, greater emphasis on education, fairness to immigrants, affirmative action for minorities, job protection against cheap imports, increased competitiveness, no new taxes, and a decreased deficit. These feats will be accomplished by drastic elimination of waste in the military (except in the candidate's own district), fearless elimination of mismanagement in welfare programs (except when it becomes heartless), and the possible imposition of some trifling new taxes that are painless because they do not really apply to anyone. Coming out foursquare for motherhood might not only be more courageous but also more interesting.

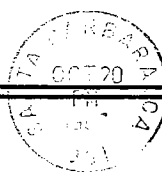
The press, which loves scandal and controversy, rarely prints candidates' position papers, aware that few individuals read them. The public does not read them because they are Pious Parchments (see Editorial, 6 March, p. 1125) that reveal little. Candidates are identified as liberals because they sound sincere when they are denouncing the military and are not to be taken seriously when they propose welfare reform; conservatives, on the other hand, are identified because they sound sincere when they demand welfare reform and perfunctory when they talk about eliminating military waste.

To improve the selection process, a genuine objective test would require each candidate to devise a total federal budget. In that way the candidate could no longer hide behind platitudes and would have to reveal his or her true priorities. To make it a real test, the previous year's federal budget, including the actual federal income and expenses, would be used as the control. Candidates would be asked to present only the differences they would suggest from the previous budget for their proposed budgets for the following year. In that manner, advocates of increasing the budget in any category would have to name the new taxes they would levy or confess that the total deficit would be increased. Those who state that they would reduce military or welfare budgets would have to indicate how, by how much, and where the money was to be shifted. Last year's income and outlay figures would be essential so that candidates would be prevented from indulging in dubious estimates about the rising gross national product allowing all proposed spending increments without concomitant increases in taxes. Allowing only changes to be articulated would prevent pages and pages of sleep-inducing rhetoric which, when deciphered, turn out to recommend a 1 percent cut in the military budget or a 0.5 percent cut in subsidies to farmers.

Those weak of heart would say that candidates would refuse to follow this procedure, but in recent years candidates have learned that they must provide their income taxes and financial statements, that they are expected to take part in public debates, and that their private lives are fair game. Persistent questions (mainly from reporters) demanding hard decisions instead of soporific clichés would lead some candidates to take forthright stands and shame others into following suit.

This plan is a particularly appropriate innovation for the upcoming race in which no candidate has yet assumed a clear lead. If candidates really wish to discuss issues instead of having their private lives examined, they will have to discuss issues in a meaningful way. Proclaiming love of mother costs nothing and is banal. Stating that you will sell your Porsche to support her in the manner to which she has become accustomed is meaningful and arouses interest.—DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, JR.

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