

UCAM members: Nuclear war would be worse than 'Day After'

By Eric Peterson

Members of the Lincoln chapter of United Campuses to Prevent Nuclear War agree that ABC's presentation on nuclear attack in "The Day After" was a relatively toned-down version of what would occur during a real blast.

The Lincoln chapter of UCAM allows UNL students and faculty to work on political aspects of nuclear issues, said UCAM's chairman, UNL physics instructor Leo Sartori.

Both Sartori and Bruce Kochis, UCAM faculty adviser and steering committee member, agreed that "The Day After" was beneficial in forcing the arms race issue into the minds of many Americans.

Sartori said although the consequences were "understated," it was realistic to depict some human beings surviving the attack. He said the annihilation of the human race in a nuclear attack is "an extreme position not held by the majority of responsible scientists," though the possibility of universal death could not be excluded.

"The race would not become extinct, but that's small consolation in terms of what we think of as civilization," Sartori said.

Kochis said that any discussion of nuclear attack is unwelcome to many Americans. "Socially and culturally, we are conditioned to run away from these issues," he said.

UCAM can serve as a way for people to have a sense of involvement in the nuclear debate, Kochis said.

"I think the really critical issue is that people not sit back and wait for somebody to lead them somewhere," he said. "People should start reading and talking critically. One should not be afraid to say 'I am afraid of all this' — but that this fear need not keep us from responding."

Kochis praised ABC's decision to broadcast "The Day After" and said that NBC's mini-series on the John F. Kennedy was placed in the same time slot as an attempt to prevent consideration of the effects of

nuclear assault.

"I thought it ("The Day After") was pretty mild stuff," Kochis said. "Anything that goes on television immediately falls under the rubric of entertainment... It left out a lot — the burned flesh, the diarrhea and vomiting."

Kochis added that the television portrayal of heroism after disaster and the attempt to hold onto property after a nuclear attack was unsupported by what actually happened after Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed in Japan.

"People lose contact with reality (after an attack)... simply because the world has been so vastly changed," Kochis said.

UCAM was founded in 1981 as a national organization by people connected with the Union of Concerned Scientists, Sartori said. Founders of the group wanted to channel enthusiasm from a demonstration that occurred two years ago into something permanent, he said. More than 200 campuses in the country now have chapters.

The UNL chapter, started in fall 1982, co-sponsored an open forum with a State Department nuclear policy maker, and also cosponsored a Dr. Helen Caldecott's presentation last summer on the medical implications of a nuclear attack.

Sartori said most groups members are faculty, but UCAM will try to broaden its student membership next semester.

Unlike many other anti-nuclear organizations which focus only on educational efforts, UCAM has endorsed specific proposals and candidates, coming out in favor of the nuclear freeze and Ground Zero efforts, Sartori said.

Kochis, a Russian instructor, said many UCAM members want to work on social and economic issues in addition to those directly connected with the nuclear arms race. Kochis said that tackling the arms race without addressing the economic and social factors which encourage it is sure to fail.

"It seems the history of the arms race shows that the (single issue approach) doesn't work," he said.

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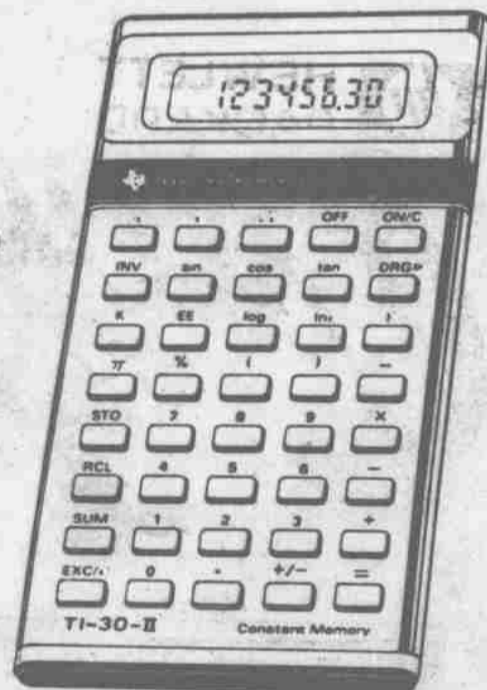
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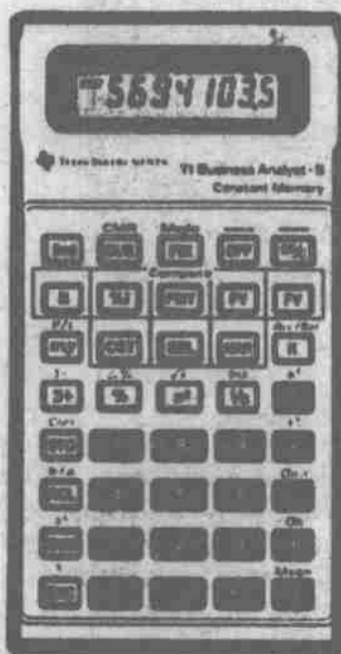


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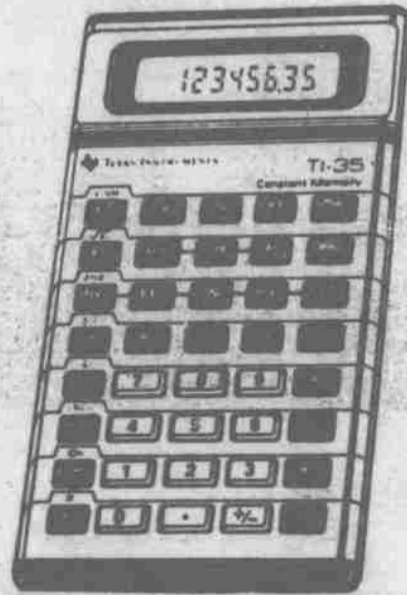
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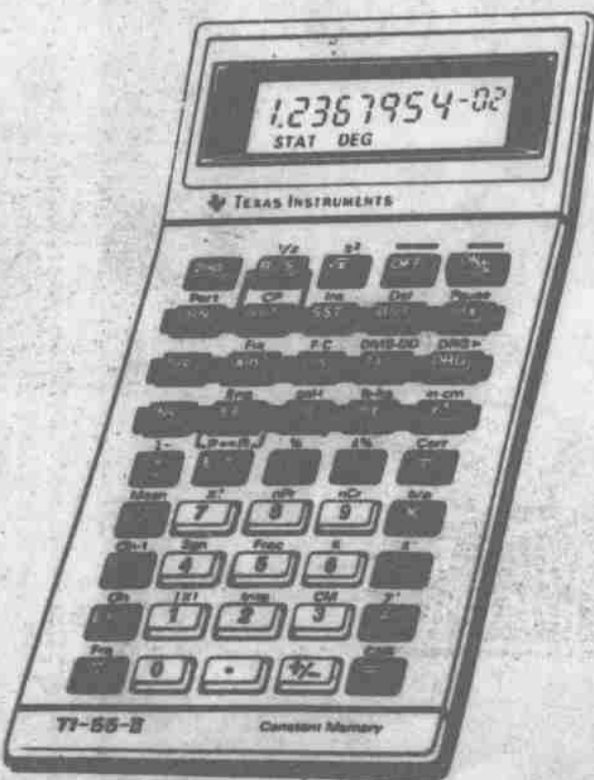
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