

SDI unPatriotic

Bush plan to boost defense imprudent

Impossible or not, George Bush must see Scud missiles in the Washington sky. What else could compel him to propose a 55 percent spending increase on Star Wars next year?

President Bush's plan, announced during his State of the Union address last week, comes during a recession, a year in which the federal debt and deficit are projected to hit record numbers. Even if the United States could afford Star Wars, it wouldn't need to. The threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union, three minutes from midnight on the Atomic Scientists' "Doomsday Clock" in the early 1980s, now seems far-fetched. Like the United States, Gorbachev and Co. can't afford an arms race.

Perhaps Bush thinks the Persian Gulf war makes this a good time to sock the American people with the \$1.6 billion increase. The more weapons we have, the merrier.

That argument ignores the obvious fact that SDI has no worldly connection to the war in the gulf, quite literally because Star Wars is to be deployed in space.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has been remarkably opportunistic in the variety of weapons he has found. He has opened up an Israeli front, a cable television front and an environmental front. But no matter where he strikes next, it won't be in space unless he hijacks a satellite.

And his Scud missiles pose no threat to the United States. Recently, they have even been falling short of their intended targets in Israel. The United States does not need multibillion dollar space technology to fight weapons modelled after the World War II German V-2 rocket.

Some of the most expensive U.S. technology, such as the B-1 bomber, doesn't even work. The B-1 has been kept from the war for fear of the havoc it could cause — not on the enemy, but on its own crews. A hundred of the \$500 million planes have been built; three have crashed. While the B-1 remains grounded, 35-year-old B-52s have carried the bulk of the strategic bombing burden against Iraq.

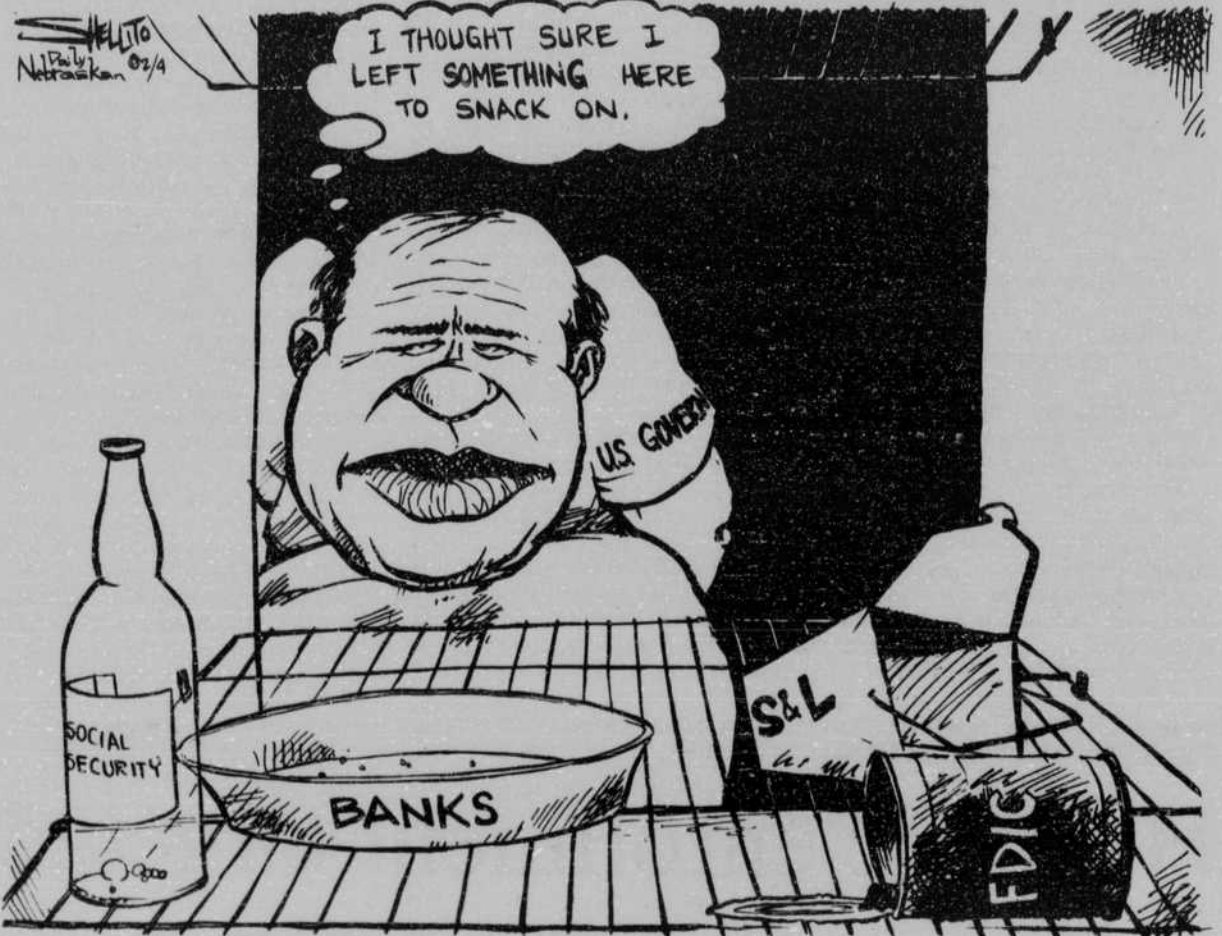
If B-1s have flopped, U.S. technology has gotten a shot in the arm from another weapons system — the Patriot missile. Supporters of SDI have used the Patriot's success against Saddam's Scuds to argue their cause.

But the Patriot, a ground-based system, has nothing in common with Star Wars, Sen. James Exon, D-Neb., told The Omaha World-Herald. The two programs are unrelated.

Even if the weapons were similar, the Patriot's success would not be a convincing argument in favor of increased Star Wars funding. About half of the Iraqi Scuds have gotten past the Patriots. Half is an acceptable ratio when failure only means an overgrown noisemaker goes off somewhere, perhaps causing a few casualties.

But 50 percent success is catastrophic when it means entire cities still will be wiped out.

—E.F.P.



JANA PEDERSEN

Policies discourage individualism

*Don't dress your cat in an apron
Just 'cause he's learning to bake.
Don't put your horse in a night-
gown
Just 'cause he can't stay awake.
Don't dress your snake in a muu-
muu
Just 'cause he's off on a cruise.
Don't dress your whale in galoshes
If she really prefers overshoes.*

—Dan Greenburg
from "Free to Be . . . You
and Me"

My favorite book as a kid was "Free to Be You and Me," compiled by Marlo Thomas. When I was a kid, I liked the book because it had a bunch of neat songs and fun poems. I even had the album so I could sing along.

But I never realized how great the book was until I'd grown up. All the poems, songs and stories in "Free to Be . . . You and Me" say just what the book cover says, just in a way kids can understand.

Freedom is a big word with an ambiguous definition. But "Free to Be" is about breaking stereotypes and building self-confidence. And through the book's words, those are things kids can understand.

The book also is highly acclaimed by educators, so it's ironic that some educators are quick to undermine the book's teachings.

Grand Island Senior High School has barred 17-year-old Kurt Stoppkotte from participating in extracurricular activities unless he cuts or pins up his long hair. Stoppkotte also was suspended from school for a day for wearing a bandanna on his head.

The school's policy bars bandannas and prevents boys from participating in extracurricular activities unless their hair is above the shirt collar in back and above the earlobes on the sides.

On the other end of the hair-length spectrum is 11-year-old Donvannah Brown, who walked into his fifth-grade class at Vernon Price Elementary School in Mesquite, Texas, and was sent to the principal's office for having hair that was too short.

Brown said he accidentally trimmed his hair to less than a quarter-inch



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with his father's battery-run moustache clipper but that he liked it that short.

School officials suspended him from class for three days in January, saying he violated a school ban on "startling and unusual" appearance.

The policies may have been designed to allow education to occur in an undisturbed environment, they may have been made to discourage the formation of gangs or they may have been instituted because the policy-makers just don't like unaverage hair.

Whatever the case, the policies are destructive not just because the First Amendment says Americans should be able to express themselves however they feel, but also because youths in particular need the opportunities to

assert their individualism.

The same educators who implemented hair-length policies probably also decry the use of illegal substances by students. But hair-length policies only encourage students to "Just Say Yes" by insisting they conform to group standards.

Telling students to turn away from friends who use drugs or alcohol encourages them to be assertive. But requiring students to cut their hair when it drops below their earlobes sends the opposite message.

Obviously, Stoppkotte is assertive. He's filed suit against Grand Island school officials to challenge the policy's constitutionality.

The attorney for Grand Island school officials said the policy doesn't prevent boys with long hair from participating in purely academic programs, just extracurricular activities.

The logic behind that is twisted. Perhaps school officials reason that participation in extracurricular activities is by choice, so students can be forced to play by different rules.

But keeping them from playing at all just reinforces negative stereotypes of people who stand out in a crowd. And hairstyles, like any other part of personal appearance, should not be stereotyped to particular behaviors.

The stereotype of boys with long hair is that they are disruptive or "troubled." Yet a traditional way to get troubled youths out of trouble is to encourage them to participate in extracurricular activities.

But the Grand Island policy encourages boys with long hair to stay away from extracurricular activities, giving them all the more reason to turn to activities their stereotype prescribes.

If Stoppkotte or Brown are disruptive in school, their hair is not the root of the problem. They should be punished for being disruptive, not for having particularly long or short hair.

If the boys aren't disruptive, they shouldn't be punished. Period.

And if policy-makers can't figure that one out, they oughta go back to school.

I know a good book they could start with.

Pedersen is a junior advertising major, a Daily Nebraskan associate news editor and a columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Student feels unwanted in U.S.

I really appreciate Mr. Biakle (DN, Feb. 1) for sharing his opinion about foreign students. I had many wrong ideas before reading that letter. Now, I can rectify myself.

I used to believe that I was part of this university, although I am a foreign student from India, and I should take a part in any open discussion in a student newspaper like the Daily Nebraskan. Now I know that I am a guest (you are so humble) over here, and partially acceptable to the American student community.

I also thought that this war is not only American policy, but a U.N. resolution in which my country also supported the allied force in the Middle

East. So, maybe I have something to say about this war, too.

Just yesterday I agreed to donate blood for the people fighting in the Middle East, not because I support this war, but because I think that the people over there are victims of this war game. They are innocent. But now I am confused, maybe my American friends don't want any foreign blood in their body.

I beg your apology for loving this country and the people over here. Maybe I am not supposed to do so.

Arup Chakraborty
graduate student
biochemistry

Islamic women treated well

I would like to make a few comments to J.S. Clement's letter (DN, Jan. 25). First of all, when people do not understand something, they will degrade or make fun of whatever it is that they do not understand; like implying that Islamic women are treated like cattle.

Well, if that is the case, then I certainly would not mind being a cow. In Islam, women have been treated with the highest respect and have been almost completely equal to men in every aspect ever since the creation of the Quran. I can not say that for America. Women here have been fighting for respect and equality for decades: Have we really come a long

way, baby? Islamic women accept and want the culture they live in. I do not see them fighting for major changes in how they are treated in their society.

And secondly, I must say that in some of the Middle East countries they may not use the same standards of punishment for crimes as the United States. But you will not find homeless and hungry people wandering around the streets, elderly people being stashed away in rest homes, drug addicts, drunks, nor high crime rates. Are we possibly doing something wrong?

Karen Lawrenz
senior
recreation and park management