

Feeding the monster

U.S. can't afford lavish military budgets

General Dynamics Co. plans to lay off 30 percent of its workforce over the next four years. The move is another example of the crumbling of the "industrial" in America's long-standing military-industrial complex.

Throughout the Cold War, that complex had been one of the pillars of the U.S. economy. The exaggerated threat of war with the Soviet Union — or with its "agents" across the globe — was played up by U.S. policymakers. It kept the electorate happy and greased the economy.

But now, in the early post-Cold War and post-gulf war days, that "threat" is seen in all its overplayed stage glory. With it comes the realization that a military-industrial economy and a global defense force are no longer necessary.

What's more, the United States and the Soviet Union can no longer afford to feed the monster.

General Dynamics realizes that. Unfortunately, President Bush and Congress don't seem to understand.

The Senate last week approved a \$1.46 trillion budget that includes a near-record projected deficit of \$290 billion.

Senators made some minor changes in Bush's outlays to domestic programs. But it left one big-ticket Bush request intact — the \$295 billion he called for in defense spending.

Granted, that amount is significantly less than the \$300 billion-plus defense budgets that were routine during the Ronald Reagan presidency. But those exorbitant budgets were considerably more than the economy could support even then, during the days of frosty, "evil empire" foreign policy.

Now, though, when that empire is in a spiraling decline, even the pretense of a threat has been reduced to never-never land. And there is no justification for the continued level of military spending.

Several liberal senators attempted to use that argument to boost their plans to reduce the defense budget last week. But Sens. Bill Bradley's and Paul Simon's plans to divert \$6 billion from the armed forces to social programs and the deficit were rejected overwhelmingly.

The logic of senators who voted against the Bradley and Simon plans flies in the face of sound management.

A General Dynamics official told The Associated Press Wednesday that trimming his corporation would make it a "leaner, but at the same time a stronger," business. Apparently, the Senate operates on different, and less sound, economic principles.

—E.F.P.



WALTER GHOLSON & PAT DINSLAGE

Realism: A postgraduate course

"What — Me worry?"

— Alfred E. Neuman

"Thousands of us, whether we like it or not, whether we intended to be or not, find ourselves standing on the cutting edges of this nation's life. We cannot, even if we wished to, sit behind closed campus doors and draw academic blinds wringing our hands and hoping that our deep problems will somehow magically disappear."

— William Birenbaum

As non-traditional students — dinosaurs, possibly — left over from the Stone Age of the '60s and '70s war and protests, we've heard it before.

This year's crop of graduates are about to discover the answer to a crucial question: How well has this university prepared them for a world that goes on its merry way oblivious to the struggles, issues and triumphs associated with surviving and succeeding in an academic environment?

It's a world with an epidemic of terminal diseases, with poverty, unemployment, oppression, homelessness, drug addiction and cutthroat economic competition.

But wait. "That's not my problem," some, maybe most, of the graduates may say. "Gimme a break — I'm just starting out. I've got loans to pay off, got to get a place to live, get started in my career. I've got plenty of problems of my own."

And they're right — they do have plenty of immediate problems of their own, and maybe even some long-term problems with which to deal. All the "-isms" have been around a long time — racism, sexism, classism — and they'll be around for a long time to come.

"When I get to be successful, when I get settled a bit, when I get to a position of power where I can really do something, then I'll..."

As non-traditional students — dinosaurs, possibly — left over from the Stone Age of the '60s and '70s war and protests, we've heard it before:

The problem definitions, the solutions, the promises and threats, the excuses. And nothing has changed.

If today's soon-to-be graduates did not deal with the "-ism" problems as students, what makes them think that all of a sudden they're going to deal with them in the future? If students can be isolated from the seriousness of the -isms on a campus, where ideas are supposed to flow freely and be exchanged between different cultures, races and religions, then why would they expect it to be any different in the harsh world of competitive economics and people even more interested in preserving their status quo power?

Everybody wants the same opportunities from the "good life": a good education with an equal right to pursue the elusive element of happiness.

But is it possible to secure happiness in the real world and smile in the face of social problems that threaten the stability of the planet? Will these graduates and future leaders construct private domains with barbed wire fences to keep them away from the problems they didn't learn about or deal with in college?

We worry that what college students and graduates can't see from the front door is what we will all have to deal with in the future. We are concerned that these students and graduates have become insensitive and preoccupied with what a bunch of political types tell all of us is the right thing to do.

Those few students who expressed some concern about the future of our planet were shunned when they mentioned the disintegration of the ozone layer or the need for ecological sanity. When they stood up for minority groups, they were labeled hippies, communists and worse.

What does this say about our current educational system? Does it mean that once the graduates step across the stage to receive their degrees, they also must close their eyes to the needs of those who are not political, never read Shakespeare or macroeconomics?

Will the class of 1991 be more concerned about jobs and economic security and less motivated by the needs of undereducated citizens in dire need of competent leadership?

Today's graduates, and the students still at the university, need to look at what UNL has prepared them for. It's easier to accept and search for the "good" job/life than to work for change, to make a difference. It's also easier to teach young minds to accept what they're told than to teach them to question what they see and hear, whether on the streets or in the classroom. Have the graduates been educated to accept that sexism, racism and classism will always be a fact, or have they been educated to work to erase those problems?

But how is change instituted? It has to start with the educational process — by telling the truth, especially in the classroom. Either education prepares students to flow into the mainstream by convincing them that the mainstream's goals are the only ones worth having, or education prepares students to continually question the status quo and its values.

Unless we begin to retool the educational systems to work for the good of the entire society now, all we will ever produce are elitism and its little cousin "-isms."

Dinslage is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan night news editor and a columnist. Gholson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DN joke issue reflects reality

I disagree with Pat Jilek's comment that the recent issue of the Daily Half-Asskin journeyed too far from the Daily Nebraskan's continuous example of journalistic ethics, integrity and style. Perhaps if it had been a part of the April 1 issue as it has been in the past, he would have come to see it as the joke issue that it is... or is it?

Mr. Jilek, is it up to the Daily Nebraskan to decide what articles to print or not to print just so that the world at large gets a rosy picture of what occurs on this campus? It seems to me that it is the job of the students and their leaders to promote a positive impression of life at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The DN's job is to report what goes on, whether positive or negative, on this campus and no one is "safe" from their journalistic eyes — ASUN, RHA, the regents, the greek system, etc.

The question is whether you or your cohorts stopped to think about the copies of the March 14 issue of the Daily Nebraskan that ended up at Lincoln businesses, the State Capitol and the homes of alumni, not to mention

in the hands of a great many UNL students and professors. On the front page of that issue, DN staff reporter Alan Phelps noted that you and several soon-to-be newly elected members of the UNITY party, including its executive slate, were watching "St. Elmo's Fire" over beer and pizza in a fraternity room on this campus. UNL, Mr. Jilek, is a dry campus and its fraternities are not excluded from this rule, neither are ASUN members and executives. As you so eloquently put it, "How can we as students expect them to take us seriously and be treated like adults when this is what we show them?"

I suggest that you not use the Half-Asskin as a scapegoat and that the leaders, yourself and the students of this campus direct concern toward ethics and integrity in daily life. Leave the reporting to the journalists of the Daily Nebraskan.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Initialed editorials represent official policy of the spring 1991 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the editorial board.

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the NU Board of Regents, who

established the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Publications Board to supervise daily production of the paper. According to the regents' policy, responsibility for the editorial content lies solely in the hands of the newspaper's student editors.

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space availability. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right

LETTER POLICY

to edit letters.

Letters should be typewritten and less than 500 words.

Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, address, phone number, year in

school and group affiliation, if any.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.