

Letters

Why the Senate Should Ratify SALT II

To the Editor:

As members of the Federation of American Scientists (most of whom are listed as Sponsors) we wish to express disagreement with F.A.S. Director Jeremy J. Stone's March 11 Op-Ed article, "SALT, in Perspective."

First, we do not believe that the goal of SALT, as purported by Stone, is the SALT process itself. We believe that the objective of any SALT agreement must be the enhancement of security through progress in limiting strategic weapons. We are less concerned that the failure to ratify the SALT II treaty might have damaging effects on the SALT process than we are concerned that a failure to ratify will be an irreparable setback to the goal of getting the dangerous strategic arms race under control.

Stone apparently believes that recommitting the treaty with the pious exhortation to "try harder" from hawks and doves alike will somehow make a satisfactory agreement more easily attainable than has been possible in seven years of negotiations. We believe this view is fundamentally flawed. Soviet leaders, and for that matter those in most other countries as well, will inevitably reach the conclusion that the U.S. Government is in-

capable of agreeing on even modest limitations to its nuclear arsenals. The Soviet military will almost certainly insist on continuing and probably accelerating all current buildups. In the U.S. the hawks will not be alone in insisting on a menu of new weapons programs to match the Soviet Union's.

If Stone is really interested in arms control and in the SALT process, which he seems to be trying to support, they will certainly be furthered more by ratification of the treaty than by failure to ratify and having to send the negotiators back to Geneva. While the treaty does not end the arms race and solve all our security problems, it is by no means as short on substance as Stone would have us believe.

For the first time it places limits on all types of strategic delivery vehicles, bombers as well as ballistic and cruise missiles.

For the first time it reverses the arms race and calls for reduction from existing force levels. The Soviets will have to scrap more than 250 relatively modern weapons.

For the first time it puts an overall limit on the total numbers of warheads each side can have. While it does not solve the ICBM vulnerability problem, it does put finite limits on the size of

the threat to land-based ICBM's.

For the first time it puts restraints on the qualitative arms race by limiting each side to testing and deploying only one new ICBM and putting restrictions on mobile land-based missiles.

Finally, it establishes many new procedures to assist verification and remove uncertainties as to the strategic threat facing each nation.

If the Senate fails to ratify the SALT II treaty:

- Do Stone and others downgrading SALT really think that the Soviet Union will reduce, not add to, its arsenal of strategic delivery vehicles?
- Do they really think that the Soviets will restrict their testing and deployment of new ICBM's to one new model between now and 1985?
- Do they really think that the Soviets will deploy no more than 820 of their SS-17, SS-18 and SS-19 ICBM's whether they are MIRVed or not? — or stop production and deployment of their potentially mobile SS-16 ICBM?
- Do they really think the U.S. is less likely to deploy the MX ICBM?
- Do they really think that the completion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty will be hastened?

Stone's article seems based on the proposition that the SALT II treaty will fail to be ratified. By poor-mouthing its accomplishments and naively implying that the renewal of negotiations will readily bring a different treaty satisfactory to doves and hawks alike, he is probably increasing the likelihood that it will not be ratified.

We believe the treaty should be ratified because it enhances our security by making important steps toward controlling strategic weapons. A failure to get it ratified would be a major setback to a sane nuclear weapons policy.

Pocket Battle

To the Editor:

A recent headline in your paper keynotes one of the epic struggles of our times: "Teamster Chief Ties Union's Wage Gains to Business Profits." Thus the greedy corporations and the

Amtrak's Sideline

To the Editor:

Allow me to amalgamate two perennially favorite topics of your readers/writers — Amtrak and the U.S. Postal Service — by recommending the former as a sometime alternative to the latter.

I recently shipped several hundred pounds of household articles, packaged in nine cartons, from San Francisco to New Jersey via the Amtrak Package Service. For just over 22 cents per pound, the shipment arrived at the Trenton railroad station within one week, in perfect condition. By way of contrast, one of two cartons sent through the mails was badly damaged in the course of its 18-day journey across the country.

As Amtrak remains under siege by Federal budget slashers, the excellent low-cost parcel service it provides should be better known to the public.

FRED B. KASNER
Brooklyn, March 26, 1979

MARVIN GOLDBERGER
President
California Institute of Technology
HERBERT SCOVILLE JR.
Vice President, Arms Control Assn.
McLean, Va., March 26, 1979

The letter was also signed by Ruth Adams of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, Hans Bethe of Cornell, Abram Chayes, Paul Doty and George Kistiakowsky of Harvard, Sidney Drell of Stanford, Richard Garwin of I.B.M., Gerard Piel of Scientific American, Charles H. Townes of the University of California at Berkeley and Jerome B. Wiesner of M.I.T.

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Robert Brandreth

greedy unions in everlasting contest as to which side can extort the most money out of my (and your) pocket. And for that majority of us who are unconnected with unions, corporations or any other pressure group, who is there to guard our interests? The Government?

Small wonder that so many of us have given up voting in elections.

L. B. SPECTOR
New York, March 26, 1979

Disabled and Equal

To the Editor:

If Mr. Schraeger's point ["Disabling the Disabled," Op-Ed March 22] were to be taken seriously, then Negroes would still be in the back of the bus — "what difference should it make" where they sit? — the insane would still be locked up, P.L. 94-142 wouldn't even be an idea and the crippled would be in workshops.

The difference it makes, Mr. Schraeger, is dignity and equality. Separate but equal is not equal. Every effort must be made to shoot for the stars and, if necessary, settle for the moon.

JOE KLEID
Program Director, The League School
Brooklyn, March 22, 1979

Water Highways Vying With a 'Paradise'

To the Editor:

If it were not for the ominous threats of petroleum boycotts from the P.L.O.'s Arafat and from South Yemen, Libya, Jordan and other members of the "immobilize America" front, I would regard the March 21 Op-Ed article "Year of the Coast" by John B. Oakes as a timely document. But if, as it now seems, our heavy highway truck traffic will soon be sharply curtailed, it may well bring a revival of neglected water highway transportation for the movement of bulk materials.

According to reliable authorities in and out of government, transportation by scow, barge and freighter costs 3 cents per ton-mile, as compared to 6 cents for rail movement and 16 cents for truck hauling.

In the beleaguered Northeast not only the major seaports — Portland, Boston, Providence, New Haven and Bridgeport — must be kept navigable, but the lesser harbors — Portsmouth, N.H., Salem and New Bedford, Mass., and Norwalk and Stamford, Conn. — must have a mean low water depth of a minimum 20 feet.

Mr. Oakes includes "dredging and filling" as part of the "developmental pressures" threatening the coast. The very mention of the word "dredging" causes a knee-jerk reaction among our highly articulate "environmentalists," among them the Oceanic Society, the Long Island Sound Taskforce,

the Coast Alliance and others. But without periodic maintenance dredging our commercial-industrial water highway terminals cannot function efficiently.

New Haven Harbor is the second largest petroleum terminal in New England, but shoaling and sedimentation have created acute navigational problems so that tankers are now creeping in with half-loads. As Representative Robert N. Giaimo noted at a Nov. 1, 1978, meeting in New Haven called by the Corps of Engineers to hear comments on the proposed dredging of the local harbor, "unless the harbor is soon dredged, one of these days a tanker will run aground, and there will be a real environmental disaster."

Yet the combined dredging of New Haven Harbor and Stamford Harbor has been held up for more than three years by protests against the monitored "capping" of the dredged muck in central Long Island Sound.

The coast cannot be transformed totally into a recreational/esthetic paradise. Water highways, which do not require costly maintenance such as snow removal, resurfacing, policing, signalization and lighting, may well become of critical importance as our enemies crimp the hose at the gas pump.

EDWARD A. CONNELL
Stamford, Conn., March 24, 1979

The writer is a marine environmental consultant.

On the Verge of One-Shot Federal/State/City Tax Returns

To the Editor:

This is the time of year when the New York taxpayer knows only too well that he must not once (Federal), not twice (New York State) but thrice (New York City) go through the annual rites of anguish of tax time. You recently (March 9) editorialized on the advantages to the taxpayer and to the tax collector if the New York tax were simply a fixed percentage of the Federal income tax and could be calculated by preparation of just the Federal return. You fantasized thusly: "Think of it: a single tax computation, three duplicated returns, and the temper of the whole population cheered beyond measure."

You will doubtless be surprised to learn there is a provision in the New York tax law that would permit precisely that for vast numbers of New York taxpayers, if only the State Tax Commission would issue the tables which the statute authorizes. This provision has languished unused on the statute books for almost 20 years because the statute (Section 603 of the Tax Law) merely authorizes the Tax Commission to publish such tables without directing it to do so. As the draftsman of that particular section, I remember well the negotiations that resulted in a last-minute change in wording from "shall promulgate tables" to "may promulgate tables."

Section 603 came in as part of the statute conforming the New York tax law to the Federal income tax, and the section was seen as the ultimate expression of the conformity idea, completely eliminating separate tax computations for state purposes for the vast majority of taxpayers whose taxable incomes under both the Federal and state schemes were identical: A simple table would tell a taxpayer that if his Federal tax is X dollars, his state tax is Y dollars.

In defense of the State Tax Commission, it must be said that the matter is not without its complications and has become much more complicated with the introduction, long after enactment of section 603, of the maxitax (the special 12 percent earned income rate) and the minitax. But this postscript-type state tax table could still be used

without causing the Legislature in Albany to abdicate to Congress its power to fix rates (just compose new tables each year), or to adjust credits (Federal credits are excluded for purposes of entering the tables), or even to establish some nonconforming state tax items. However, as you suggest, the fewer items Albany treats "differently from Washington," like capital gains and bond interest, the broader the use of a postscript state tax. But note that the existence of such nonconforming items does not preclude use of postscript tables, it merely narrows the class of eligible users.

Now that you have started something, why not press the State Tax Commission to implement its existing authority?

ALVIN D. LURIE
New York, March 27, 1979

The Times welcomes letters from readers. Letters for publication must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Because of the large volume of mail received, we regret that we are unable to acknowledge or to return unpublished letters.