

Alert system vital

A letter appeared in the Emerald (Nov. 27) alleging that on Nov. 9 the world came to the brink of nuclear destruction because of an equipment failure in our missile tracking system. This incident, which caused a nuclear alert until the error was discovered, in Mr. Austin's words "almost triggered off World War III." We were six minutes into the 30 that are left to the human race once an alert is completed and the bombs start to fly."

Mr. Austin does not seem to realize why there is a 30 minute alert sequence and what events would have to transpire before our missiles would actually start to fly. Thirty minutes is the amount of time that would elapse between the first observation of a re-entering Russian ICBM on radar screens and the impact of that missile on a target in the northern part of the U.S. The final stage of the retaliatory alert sequence requires confirmation that nuclear weapons are actually exploding in this country. Nothing short of this, whether machine or human error, can trigger our response. Certainly the incident of Nov. 9 must have been hair-raising for those six minutes, but was there any chance that it could have led to World War III? I think the answer is no.

The U.S. can afford to wait until a Russian attack has actually arrived before shooting back because, at the present time, we possess what is known as an "assured second strike capability." In other words; no possible Russian first strike could destroy enough of our missiles to prevent the U.S. from destroying Russia in response. It is the ability to absorb an entire Russian attack and still fight back that provides the 30 minute cushion in the alert sequence. Without the absolute survivability of our deterrent, we might indeed be in a situation where we would have to shoot back without being certain we were under attack.

Dare one say a word in favor of the Trident and the MX missile? These weapons systems are designed to do something which, in a few years, our present day weapons may not be able to do: survive. Without some such system, however costly, we could someday lose that cushion of time which today shields us from accidental warfare.

Dave Clark
graduate, biology

Repressive states

I address my letter to Mr. Szymanski, who has written two letters that appeared in the Emerald this term.

I am extremely impressed by the logic you use in your arguments. Where did you learn it? I am interested because a lot of people here seem to argue like you. They choose a position they like and then find evidence to support it. I like this because it is a lot easier than doing it right, namely looking at all the evidence and then picking the best position.

I am referring to your self-assumed idea that socialist and communist countries are less repressive than American client-states. To support your argument you rattle off figures about the Soviet Union and American client-states. Unfortunately this only goes part way. What about Soviet client-states? Have you heard that a Soviet client-state has expelled an entire minority from its borders, leading to suffering and death for hundreds of thousands? Or how about a once Chinese and now Soviet client-state which is committing genocide on itself? Is this repression? To go further, you mention that the Soviets are no longer torturing people. However, a change in leadership could easily turn them back to its use; this is a problem for all dictatorial governments.

You also bring up an interesting idea that American client-states can be jus-

tified if they are shown less repressive than communist states. Here you automatically assume they are more repressive, using Iran for evidence. Now I know many people seem to think Khomeini is a great leader, but I would like to point out that he is killing as many, if not more, people than the shah. Should we return the shah to power?

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that you drop your preconceived ideas and look at the issues and evidence. If done critically, I feel you will arrive at the conclusion that all dictatorial governments should be fought against. Only those governments that fully represent the people seem capable of restraining from killing and torturing. Note: To my knowledge no communist country fits the bill. Think about it.

James E. Earl
senior, anthropology

Program shrinking

The jazz program at the University has suffered a gross injustice. Due to an overall decline in the enrollment in the school of music, funds to the school were decreased. The decline in students was not in the jazz program. It has grown over 200 percent in membership in the past two years. The school of music granted a fellowship to Malcolm Lynn Baker, a competent musician and educator, to fill the need for additional staff due to program's growth. This fellowship has now been cancelled and the probability for a sustained, quality jazz-program is doubtful.

The loss of such an instructor will force the responsibilities to be redistributed. Such burdens on the remaining instructors will inevitably lead to the closure of some classes. Now in jeopardy are such classes as composition, jazz improvisation and the existence of at least one combo due to a lack of advisers. The staff that remain are extremely well qualified and competent instructors, yet their schedules are already overburdened.

As a student of the school of music planning to study jazz composition and improvisation, this cutback has caused me to reconsider my education at the University for studies elsewhere. Pursuing an education where student interest is placed second and growing programs are punished by staff and monetary cutbacks doesn't seem to me to be the pentacle of learning environments.

Mike Martin
music

Learn from the past

Over this past Veteran's Day, the Veterans Administration released the results of an advance survey of the general public's attitudes toward Vietnam era veterans, conducted for them by the Louis Harris organization.

When asked whether "we did the right thing in getting into the fighting in Vietnam," or whether we should have stayed out, just 20 percent of the public maintain that involving American troops in that conflict was the right thing to have done, while some 64 percent believe that our involvement there was in error (a margin of better than three to one).

Two main types of negative effects in the U.S. stemming from the war are the loss of public confidence in institutions, especially the federal government, and the problems of veterans who served in Vietnam. Other negative effects perceived by the public include: international effects, including inflation; social divisiveness; and increasing use of drugs. The only positive effect mentioned by substantial numbers is that the peace movement may help the country avoid similar incidents in the future.

I dearly hope we do not forget the lessons of Vietnam; otherwise, I'm afraid that 10 years from now we may be coping with the effects of a war in places such as Bandar Abbas, Shiraz, Esfahan and Tehran.

Dave Isenberg
Vietnam veteran

Research assailed

So now, once again, Mr. Bob Jensen (Soph., Political Science) has been moved to share his thoughts with you and I (Letters — Nov. 30). This is the same "informed and concerned" citizen whom apparently thought (until I recently enlightened him) that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were islands, the same "careful researcher" ("Columbia River most radioactive in the world") whom, when asked to share his research techniques, unabashedly replied, "Oregonian headlines." Headlines!!

Now we have Mr. Jensen's comments on an article by Doug Fick (Nov. 19) about temporary storage of low-level radioactive wastes, the last paragraph of which reports that the University health physicist "advocates a search to find alternative disposal methods for low-level waste materials." Mr. Jensen's uncanny inability to understand simple English somehow transforms the desire

to see a continuation of the study of alternate disposal techniques into — abracadabra — an "advocation of incineration of the radioactive material." This fellow blithely goes on to defame the professional competence (and probably moral character) of the health physicist quoted in Fick's article.

Doubtlessly, we will be treated to similar pusillanimous poppycock in the future as Mr. Bob Jensen continues to give renewed vigor to the meaning of the word "sophomoric."

Robert L. McNeely
junior, computer science

Quote clarification

Thank you for reporting that I have announced my candidacy for Democratic nomination, Oregon House of Representatives, District 40, (South Eugene area). Since many cynics are convinced that the "political season" is laced with "nonsense," I was sorry to see that your story, possibly through a series of typos, deleted a few words from a phrase I used, rendering it nonsensical. Since the phrase is a key theme to my campaign, let me refer to Mark Twain and Wayne Morse, and set the record straight.

Twain said that we're supposed to live our lives in such a way that we could sell a parrot to the town gossip. I like to think he was setting some goals for modern politicians.

Morse carried the same theme throughout his teaching of law, and service in the Senate: "The procedure is as important as the substance." It is, of course, the problem of ends and means.

What I really said is: "The way that public business is conducted is as important to me as the business itself."

Ruth Shepherd
candidate, Oregon House of
Representatives, District 40

letters policy

The Emerald will accept and try to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of concern or interest to the University community. Letters must be typewritten, using 65 character margins, and should be triple-spaced. Letters must be signed and the author's field of study or faculty status noted. An address and telephone number should be included whenever possible.

