

What if an atomic bomb... ?

A group of medical and military professionals gathered at the Hult Center Saturday to explain the medical, psychological, ecological and sociological implications they see resulting from the nuclear arms race and the threat of atomic warfare.

Eight featured speakers, including Aaron Novick, University Biology Department head, made presentations at "The Last Epidemic: The Medical Consequences of Nuclear War," a symposium sponsored by the Eugene chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility.

PSR is a national organization of medical doctors formed to tell the public of the potential consequences of nuclear holocaust and of the medical community's inability to provide meaningful assistance.

"The probability of the extinction of the human race is growing," said retired Navy Admiral John Marshall Lee, a former staff member of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

"A rational scheme" for nuclear strategy is necessary, Lee told an audience of 300 people at the symposium. "Its purpose as a deterrent should be the main focus. . . . No one can get a meaningful strategic superiority."

Dr. Christine Cassel, associate professor of Public Health and Preventative Medicine at the Oregon Health Sciences University, used the Hult Center as Ground Zero in her description of the effects of a nuclear bomb dropped on Eugene.

All people within 1.7 miles of Ground Zero would be "instantly vaporized. . . . 76,000 deaths and 48,000 serious injuries would occur." Radiation would continue to kill anyone within 150 miles of Eugene through radiation sickness caused by the fallout, Cassel said.

Novick, who worked on the initial atomic bomb, said "No one is qualified to talk about the long-term effects of nuclear war," but went on to hypothesize about the world left to the survivors.

"Most institutions we depend on will be gone," he said, explaining that food production, fresh water supplies, plant life and the atmosphere, as well as government and transportation systems, would be drastically altered.

Admiral Noel Gayler, former National Security Agency director, talked about preventing nuclear war.

"Nuclear problems are human problems, needing human remedies," Gayler said. "If we will but take our fate into our own hands, we can solve this crisis of humanity."

Dr. M. Brewster Smith of the University of California at Santa Cruz talked about the psychological impact of the constant threat of nuclear war. He said the nuclear age and the threat of "meaningless extinction" have caused a here-and-now hedonism in our culture.

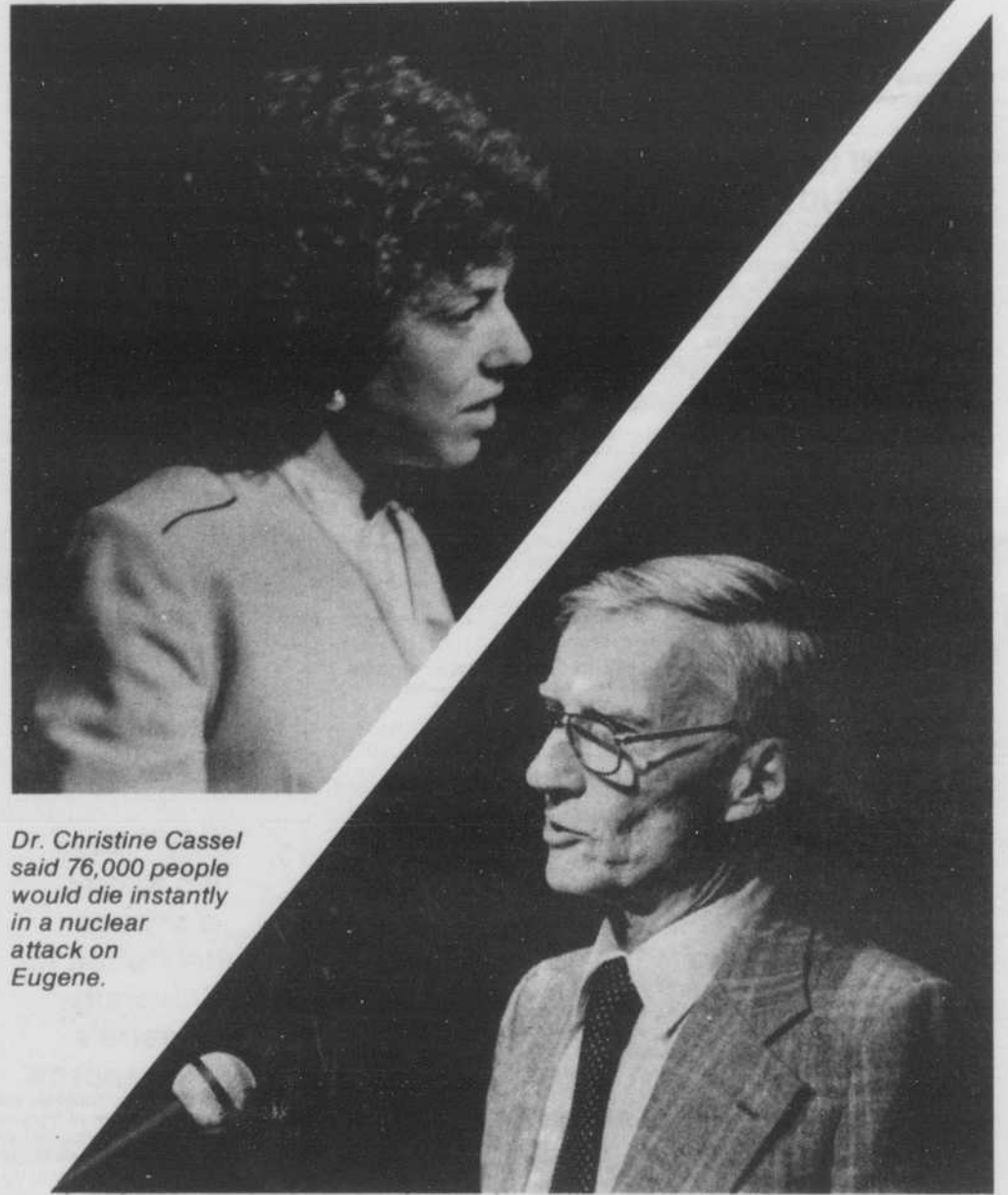
"It undermines the hopes of youth, causing a substantial increase in anxiety, which is partly responsible for increased drug abuse and other self-destructive behaviors."

Although Dr. Phillip Farley admitted that "it's not clear what's going on" at the two current sets of Soviet-American negotiations (strategic weapons or START talks and European-based missile negotiations, both taking place in Geneva), the Stanford Arms Control and Disarmament Program member said he remains "guardedly optimistic" about the prospects for preventing nuclear confrontation.

Part of Farley's optimism stems from his contentions that "Communism is fragmented internationally" and "surrounded by historic and potential enemies."

"We've made a Faustian bargain with nuclear weapons but we can still change our minds," said psychiatrist Judith Lipton, chairperson of Seattle's PSR chapter.

"Nuclear weapons are wholly evil, but we can eliminate them," she said.



Dr. Christine Cassel said 76,000 people would die instantly in a nuclear attack on Eugene.

Phillip Farley, a senior research assistant for the Stanford Arms Control Disarmament program, spoke on "Current Arms Negotiations: Perspectives for Prevention."

Arms race costs health care

"The nuclear arms race is the chief obstacle to providing primary health care to everyone in the world by the year 2000."

Worldwide defense expenditures "shift priorities and drain resources" that could be used to improve world health, according to Dr. Malcolm Peterson of the University of Washington School of Medicine.

Speaking to an audience of more than 300 at the Physicians for Social Responsibility symposium Saturday, Peterson outlined exactly how the costs of the arms race affects health care today.

"The World Health Organization outlined a plan whereby primary health care could be provided worldwide by the year 2000, if only the resources were there to do it. We have found that the money spent on arming ourselves could more than pay for this objective," Peterson said.

"It's a matter of achieving human dignity," he said. "As far as we can see, this is prevented by the tremendous flow of money into arms and armaments."

Peterson showed the ratio of defense expenditures to public medical expenditures in the United States.

In fiscal year 1982, \$1.7 billion will be spent on the food stamps program, while just under \$3 billion will be spent on the MX Missile program alone.

The national child nutrition program will be allotted \$1.5 billion, while one Trident Ballistic Missile submarine costs Americans \$1.6 billion.

The alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health programs in the United States will cost \$63 million, while only one KC-10A Cargo Aircraft costs \$60 million.

Medicaid will be allotted only \$714 million this year, while one CG-47 AEGIS Cruiser costs more than \$810 million.

Peterson also pointed out that spending cuts in social security disability pro-

gram have resulted in at least three deaths.

"Of the 200,000 people cut off, three have died," he said. "These people were notified by the government that they were healthy enough to return to work and could not receive any more Social Security benefits. One woman, who had three different types of cancer, died the same day that she was notified."

The social security cuts were made so more funds could be channeled into the defense budget, he said.

When the deaths were called to the attention of the Social Security Commissioner, his response was, "We do make mistakes, but a three-percent error rate isn't that bad," Peterson said.

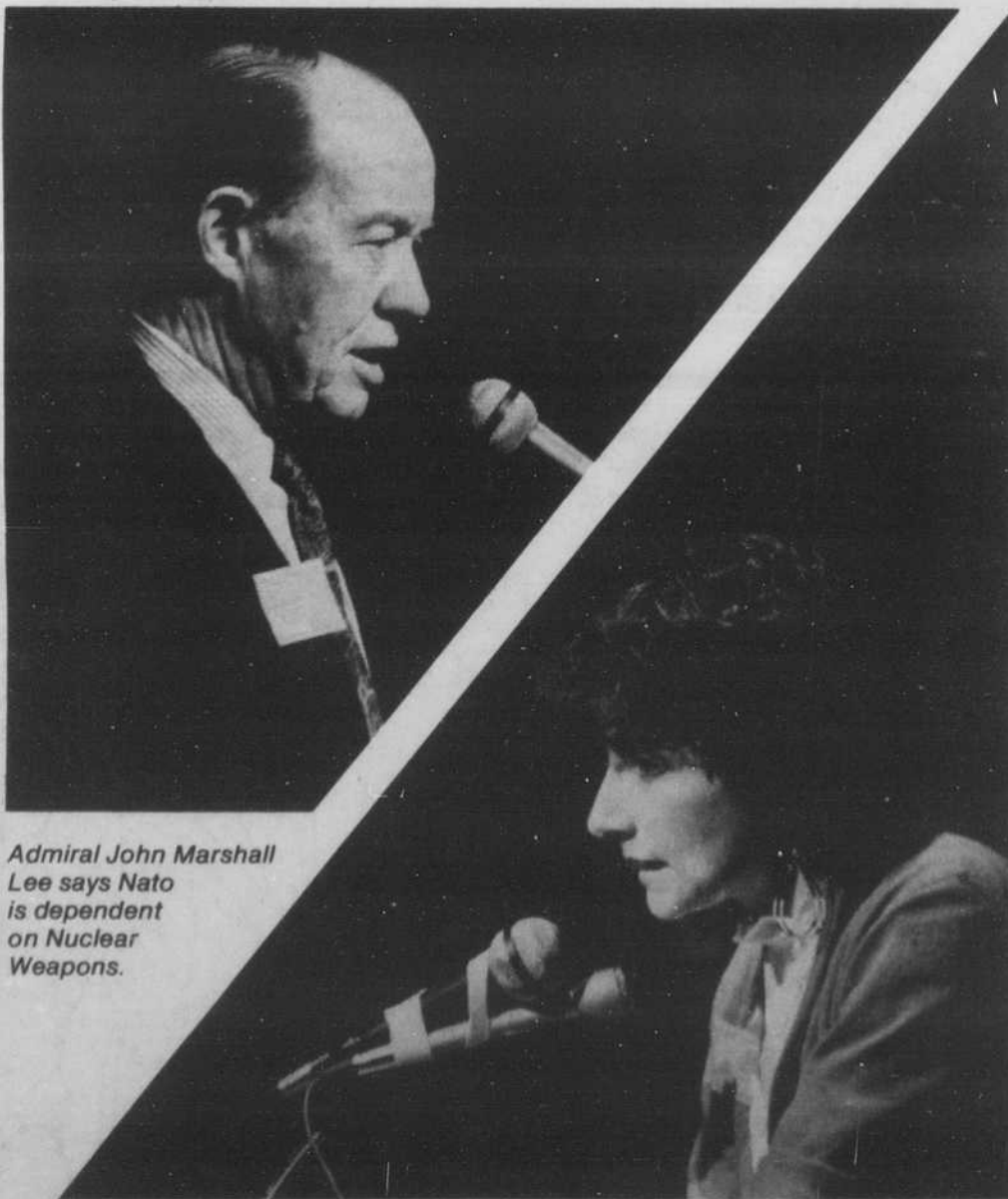
Peterson also argued that accurate disability evaluations are more difficult to make because the Social Security Administration is working under such stringent budget cuts. These cuts would be unnecessary if defense spending was not so great, he said.

"What we have are military expenditures taking away from health care expenditures," Peterson said.

"Cutting military expenditures would not necessarily mean more money for health care," Peterson said. "I'm not foolish enough to think that if they cut this they'll expand that."

"That would probably be very pie-in-the-sky type thinking. But, consider this: It would only cost \$7 billion to make all the fresh water in the world safe to drink by 1990, and it would cost \$50 billion — 10 percent of what the world spends on the arms race in one year — to provide primary health care to everyone."

Stories by Brad Berten
and Ailan Routh
Photos by Bob Baker



Admiral John Marshall Lee says Nato is dependent on Nuclear Weapons.

Dr. Judith Lipton, a psychiatrist with the Seattle Physicians For Social Responsibility, talked on "Preventive Therapy: Movements from Paralysis to Action." In fiscal year 1982 \$1.7 billion will be spent on the food stamp program, while just under \$3 billion will go to the MX missile.