

Year of Peace may be wishful thinking

The United Nations christened 1986 the Year of Peace. And on the first day of the new year, both President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev pledged devotion to peace and disarmament.

But in terms of real progress between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Nations' declaration appears to be little more than wishful thinking.

True, the potential for achieving peace has been bolstered. The New Year's Day speeches by Reagan and Gorbachev were characterized largely by optimism. And the November Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting defrosted the lines of communication between the superpower chiefs and opened the door to cultural exchanges and future meetings.

But the world will not find peace simply by paying homage to it. Positive thinking and inspirational ceremonies are useless if not buttressed with concrete actions. And in terms of tangible moves, the world has not progressed toward peace. Instead, it has lost ground.

The passage of 1985 saw the expiration of the Salt II treaty and of the Soviet moratorium on nuclear tests. And the primary barrier separating the world from peace stands strong. The United States remains undaunted in its support of the Strategic Defense Initiative, commonly called "Star Wars."

SDI is a ridiculous fantasy. The project's price tag is estimated at \$1 trillion and even ardent supporters admit it would not intercept every missile aimed at it.

Scores of reputable scientists assert the system is mechanically impossible. In December, columnist Flora Lewis reported startling evidence suggesting the results of reportedly "successful" SDI tests have been flagrantly misrepresented by the government.

SDI has placed arms agreements squarely between a rock and a hard place. The Soviets insist U.S. support of Star Wars will sabotage arms talks, and the United States refuses to relinquish the program.

Even the New Year's Day exchange of greetings, intended to express goodwill, did not escape references to SDI by both Reagan and Gorbachev.

In a clear reference to SDI, Reagan told Soviet citizens he hopes the world will eventually rely on "defense systems that threaten no one." He said the United States and the Soviet Union are conducting research on a new defense technology and said his dream is that the technology could "one day free us all from the threat of nuclear destruction."

Gorbachev directly referred to the system in his address to Americans with the statement, "... it is senseless to seek greater security for oneself through new types of weapons" and a call for "keeping outer space peaceful."

By keeping the dream of Star Wars alive, the administration has forgone the Soviet offer to cut its nuclear arsenal in half in exchange for U.S. abandonment of the program. And recent agreements with Great Britain and West Germany to aid SDI research have aggravated the problem by fortifying SDI's credibility and broadening its base of support.

Arms talks between the United States and the Soviet Union are scheduled to resume Jan. 16. If 1986 has any chance of living up to its designated title, the United States and the Soviet Union will have to find mutual ground concerning Star Wars.



Letters

Personal choice

I have a couple of random reactions to the story (ODE, Jan. 6) about the Marijuana Initiative, and to some of the opinions voiced therein.

1. About the only argument folks like John Williams have against legalization of marijuana is "Why make it legal for no good reason? It's dangerous to public health, anyway." This completely ignores the fact that marijuana was (Harrison Narcotics Act of 1924, etc.) originally made illegal for no good reason at all. All that legalization would be is the removal of a completely pointless law. The question of public health is absurd — if we outlaw all menaces to public health, we have to cut out alcohol, nicotine, automobiles (people get run over), pesticides, etc. The law is supposed to protect reasonable people from unreasonable dangers, not protect everybody from everything.

2. Mr. Page's ill-considered comment that "Had people been more informed about what effect alcohol would have on our society, they may not have repealed Prohibition," is laughable. The effects of alcohol were rampant during, and as a result of, Prohibition (blindings from bathtub gin, speakeasies, etc.). All we see in

Prohibition is proof positive that laws don't make substance-abuse problems go away.

3. Since when is the law a substitute for common sense? Alcohol and nicotine are legal because sensible people can deal with them sensibly. If the law is meant to cause sensibility, we'll have to legislate against daytime TV and rollerskating.

Jonathan Zweig
Math Major

Hypocrisy

It was heartening to see Glen Sacks pierce the neo-conservative chic of Afghan adulation (ODE, Dec. 12). The neo-conservatives claim they are the only reliable trustees of Western values and tradition. Yet, they delete the Russian contributions to the Western heritage while slobbering over Afghan barbarism. To me, praise of such barbarians has an aspect of decadence.

I am deeply sorry that the Russians behave as true humans by letting themselves be provoked into atrocities by Afghan barbarism. However, what entitles Americans to throw the first stone? The Vietnam war perhaps? Furthermore, it seems to me; Americans should remind themselves every day: Here but for the grace of God go we, since apprehension that Mexico may become our Afghanistan is not so farfetched. Surely, the neo-conservatives of all people would not want the United States to stand idly by if Mexico were raked by civil war.

There is indeed one Western

trait the neo-conservatives seem to have a monopoly on — hypocrisy. I don't envy them. Indeed, whenever I read their voice on campus, The Commentator, I have to pause frequently because its mixture of hot sauce and whipped cream sickens me.

A.E. Brettauer
Eugene

Copier solution

For those of us with substantial research needs, check-out time at the UO Library, with more than one or two books is a farce. Until such time as funds become available for a computer system to replace the current archaic one, something must be done about the copy machines that represent the major alternative. Has anyone else grown weary of the 75 percent downtime of the library's antiquated machines, and the lines of nickel-laden students six-deep at the one or two that may be working?

If the firm that provides the current gear cannot, or will not, back its product with reliable service, then find one that will. There are plenty of organizations that would be happy to install a number of high-quality and technologically advanced copiers. Additionally, both the number and location of machines in the library should be increased as two at each stairwell entrance in insufficient, especially when neither is working. Finally, reduce the cost — 5 cents for each copy is too high and shows signs of monopolistic advantage.

Perhaps what the library needs is a little competitive pressure. I suggest that the several copy stores in Eugene be allowed to bid on handling the library. An innovative approach might be to set up a small copy center within the library with efficient machines and staff to handle student copy needs. This would be especially helpful for materials not allowed to leave the library.

Tracy R. Ellis
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Tuesday, January 7, 1986

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.

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