

Reagan's Star Wars finally light-sabered

Good riddance to President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative program, which Defense Secretary Les Aspin officially ended Thursday with the announcement that the United States would concentrate instead on a simpler ground-based anti-missile system.

Nicknamed "Star Wars" by Reagan himself, SDI was a thorn in the side of rational, money-conscious individuals ever since its inception in 1983. In the past decade, SDI took tens of billions of dollars from the U.S. budget and yet never progressed past the research stages. Officials gave no specific timetable for its completion — it could have taken an extra 20 or 30 years, as far as the public knew.

Fortunately, the Clinton administration realized the folly of spending \$6.3 billion (the amount the Bush administration had penciled in for 1994) for a hypothetical system that may have never progressed beyond development stages. Hopefully, some of the \$2.5 billion savings can go toward other U.S. programs that could use the money (little programs, such as health care, school funding and AIDS research).

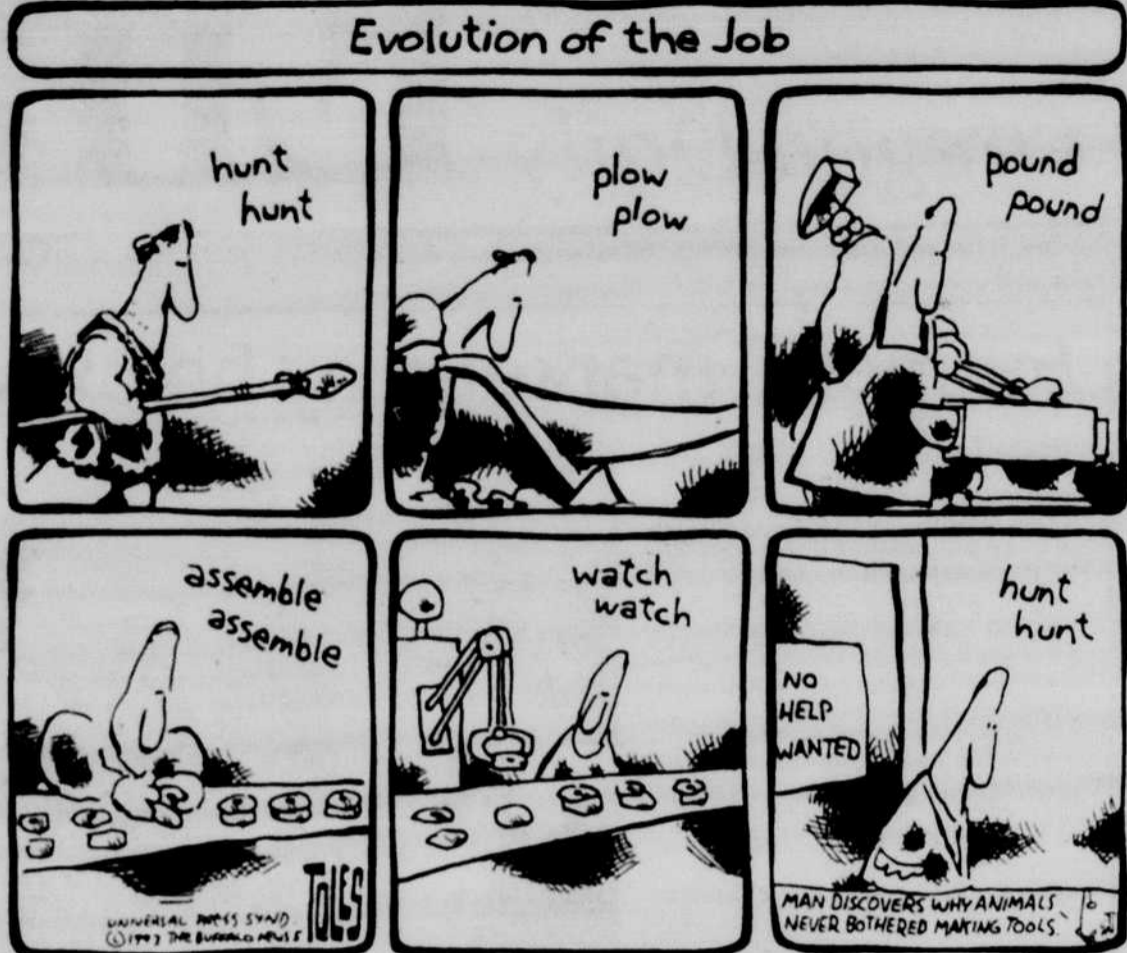
The change of focus from space to ground-based defense makes sense as well. Remember, the Cold War has ended (according to most reports), and the original purpose of SDI was to protect America from a surprise Soviet missile attack. Therefore, on a purely surface level it is safe to say that the risk is no longer there, and thus the research is unneeded.

Ground-based defenses, however, can be used effectively in today's defense situations. We saw this during the Persian Gulf War, when Iraqi Scuds were routinely extinguished by Patriot missiles.

But the cut makes sense on a deeper level as well. The government, just like any American family, must make priorities in its budget. And sometimes a new Ferrari is just too expensive. SDI is not deserving, simply because it isn't concrete enough to merit any more money. Government defense officials had a decade to make progress — their time is up.

Reagan commented Saturday on the cut: "I may not be a Rhodes scholar, but I do know this: If we can protect America with a defensive shield from incoming missile attacks, we should by all means do so." Absolutely, but only if all children are well immunized, all families have homes, and all citizens have employment. It makes no sense to fear unsubstantiated threats when there are so many real threats here at home.

The final reason to rejoice about the demise of SDI is that no longer will the public have to put up with the manipulative posturing of SDI supporters, who seemed more interested in promoting the "Star Wars" title of the program than the need for defense. To Reagan, SDI was more of a fantasy than a reality, which is probably why he liked it. Fortunately, the public no longer has to pay for a fantasy that would never come true.



OPINION

Mixed messages at conference



After attending the Women on the Move Conference at the Eugene Hilton last week, I was more frustrated with the state of the women's movement than I had been before I arrived.

It wasn't that I didn't enjoy the speaker (I was only able to see Anna Quindlen, a columnist for *The New York Times* because that's all my press pass would allow) — Quindlen was great. She articulated her views on the women's movement very well. I was moved by her words and her wisdom and entranced by her integrity and intelligence. But what disappointed me was the irony of what I saw outside of the conference.

As soon as I walked toward Playwright's Hall, waiting for the room to open up for Quindlen's speech, I noticed a row of display tables. There was a table from the University Bookstore and a local car lot, but neither of those bothered me. What bothered me were the two makeup tables that sat next to the conference room wall, just waiting for a "woman on the move" to ask for cosmetic tips.

Now, I do not consider myself a feminist. I believe in complete equality for women, but that is about as far as my radical views go.

And yes, I do wear makeup and I don't believe there is anything wrong with going to a beauty salon now and then, but I believe cosmetic counters at a "Women on the Move Conference" are a bit ridiculous.

Maybe I'm overreacting, but I believe the makeup counter was contradictory to the purpose of the conference. Originally, I

wasn't interested in staying because I got the impression that organizers would be handing out free lipstick. If I wanted a makeover, I would have gone to Meier & Frank. I expected to learn about things that would help me succeed and make tough choices about my role as a woman in the coming years.

More ironic, however, were the complementary, bright blue bags that were handed out to each conference participant. The bags read: MANPOWER Temporary Services.

Gender equality in language is a separate issue that I won't even try to address, but to me, the vision of 650 women carrying these bags was as ironic as it would be if chainsaws were handed out to environmentalists at the forest conference.

I recently heard Robin Morgan, editor of *Ms. Magazine*, speak at the University and was refreshed by the consistency she has been able to establish at the new ad-free publication.

Because *Ms.* is free of advertising, it doesn't have to cater to its advertisers or deal with a negative portrayal of women in advertising, and it can strive for equality and justice for women in its editorial and news pages.

This is the kind of integrity I would have liked to have seen at the Women on the Move Conference. I'm not criticizing the use of makeup and I'm not asking MANPOWER Temporary Services to change its name. I just believe that for the sake of running a tactful conference, or for the sake of avoiding

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hypocrisy, the conference coordinators could have at least kept their messages consistent.

Inside Playwright Hall, Anna Quindlen urged female entertainers to curb the negative portrayal of women in advertising and music videos. She encouraged people like Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey to say "Hey, we don't need this woman in a bikini!"

Now I don't believe that the cosmetic counters or the MANPOWER bags even came close to the negative connotations one gets from women in bikinis, but I believe the program organizers should follow Quindlen's advice and not mix their message of equality with sexist displays.

The planners should have at least let women pretend for one day that the world isn't ignoring their efforts to be taken seriously.

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