

Opinion

Space: beacon of hope or harbinger of doom?

The dawning of the new year brings with it the beginning of a crucial era in space technology. America has entered the age of the reusable spacecraft. Trips into orbit have become commonplace, receiving only small notice on inside pages rather than the front-page attention they used to command.



Loren Steffy

But just as these space missions are being taken for granted, so is the potential of space exploration. Obviously, space means vast scientific achievements, but it also can be the means of political advancements.

Satellites and astronauts from many foreign countries have hitchhiked on our space shuttle. Many more cooperative missions are planned with groups such as the European Space Agency. A joint mission to Mars with Soviet cosmonauts also has been discussed. Therein lies the greatest potential of all — cooperation.

Working together, the United States and the Soviet Union could overcome

not only scientific hurdles, but political stone walls as well. The potential for peaceful cohabitation has never been greater, yet we cloud this opportunity by attempting to develop weapons which will carry our terrestrial squabbles into the heavens.

In the name of defense, we are proposing the placement of armed satellites in orbit. The effectiveness and efficiency of the Strategic Defense Initiative (or "Star Wars") is unclear, but the political motives are obvious.

President Reagan is trying to sell Star Wars as an end to nuclear war.

The nickname is the best advertising gimmick. It's taken from one of the most popular movies of all time, in which a fearless young hero single-handedly defeats the menace of an oppressive Evil Empire.

But how can a defense system, no matter how fool-proof, end the arms race? Better defenses merely mean better offenses will be developed, perpetuating an arms buildup, not a freeze.

Many countries, not just the Soviets, oppose SDI, claiming it violates the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Gerald C. Smith, director of U.S. negotiations for the treaty, said those signing the treaty agreed it banned testing and

development of space-based defenses.

But more important is the moral argument. Right now we are setting the pace for future space exploration. So far unarmed spacecraft outnumber armed ones. But how long will this blissful imbalance continue? If we arm satellites, how long will it be before we arm space shuttles? When will we leave our earthly grievances on Earth and explore the heavens as humans rather than individual countries?

If we arm spacecraft to help fight our terrestrial disputes, what will happen centuries from now when we travel to other stars? Will we continue to battle over differences that were spawned tril-



MARGULIES
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ions of miles away?

Space is final frontier. It's our last chance to do things right — to work together to overcome our prejudices, so that even if we can't find peace here, we may be able achieve it elsewhere.

We are embarking on a brand new

year, one in which the space program could take some giant leaps for mankind — if it doesn't trip over some kind of man's hatred.

Loren Steffy is a junior journalism major and the Opinion Page Editor of *The Battalion*.

Everything you wanted to know about Gramm-Rudman

Repeat after me. Gramm-Rudman! Gramm-Rudman!

It doesn't ring a bell? Don't worry, I've anticipated all your questions.

What is a Gramm-Rudman?

Gramm-Rudman is not a what, but a who — actually three whos — Sen. Gramm of Texas, Sen. Rudman of New Hampshire and Sen. Hollings of South Carolina. They spearheaded the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act. Hollings is usually dropped from the credit because most newspapers do not have the space to include all three names in the story.

Is Gramm-Rudman-Hollings for real?

No, it's a dream decreeing that by 1991 the government must balance the federal budget by not spending any more money than it takes in. This has been man's fantasy since he learned to fly.

It sounds like a musical comedy. Some people consider it a tragedy.



Art Buchwald

The military hates Gramm-Rudman because they fear their appropriations will be severely cut. The Democrats are afraid Gramm-Rudman will knock out all the progressive legislation achieved over the past 50 years. And the president fears Gramm-Rudman will wipe out his authority to dictate a budget he can live with. You will hear a lot about Gramm-Rudman but don't expect it to get a standing ovation.

What kind of money are we talking about?

The first cut is \$12 billion, followed by another of \$50 billion for fiscal 1987. Isn't that a drop in the bucket for Washington?

It's peanuts, especially when we're spending a trillion a year. But Gramm-Rudman's goal is to eventually chop off \$200 billion.

Now you're getting into street theater.

It could develop into a good fight because President Reagan has no intention of cutting "Star Wars." At the same time, Reagan has no problem using Gramm-Rudman as an excuse to shut down the Small Business Administration, the Job Corps, the Student Loan Program and the Department of Education.

Why did Congress vote for Gramm-Rudman?

Some voted for it because 1986 is an election year. Others voted for it because they believed the bill would embarrass the president. Still others thought Gramm-Rudman would help the president. But the majority voted

for it because they didn't understand it.

Didn't Congress realize that there would be a day of reckoning if they threw in with Gramm-Rudman?

Most of those who say they are for it are hoping the law will be declared unconstitutional. They even put a clause in the bill saying it had to be brought to the

courts as soon as possible.

Where does the president stand on Gramm-Rudman?

Nobody knows. When he signed the bill, he said he would be happy to see it tested in the courts. But now he wants the Justice Department to keep it from getting to the courts. The thinking is the president loves the idea of Gramm-Rudman but not the bill itself. Reagan's biggest worry is that to meet the requirements of the act Congress will demand that he raise taxes.

If the president won't raise taxes, can he do to meet the Gramm-Rudman conditions?

Ask for revenue enhancers, which are not taxes although they look like taxes. Feel like taxes and taste like taxes.

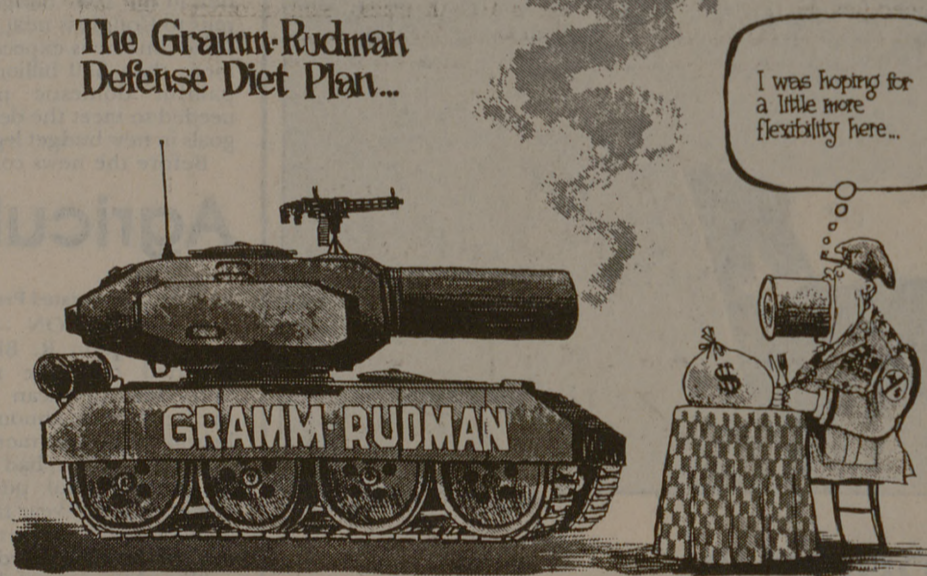
Why are they called enhancers?

Because if the president called them taxes the Democrats would accuse him of going back on his pledge to love them.

What else does the Gramm-Rudman act promise besides burlesque, tragedy, melodrama and musical comedy?

Try soap opera.

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.



Mail Call

Unsportsmanlike conduct

EDITOR:

After the Cotton Bowl, I witnessed five young men with "Twelfth Man Towels" taunting some Auburn fans. Other schools may display such lack of class, but I always thought Texas A&M's pride would be above this type of thing.

If you see any of your friends displaying such behavior, please remind them A&M stands for good sportsmanship, win or lose.

Carolyn Goodwin

Bowl coverage inadequate

EDITOR:

The following is an open letter to the director of CBS Sports: This letter is in reference to your coverage of the 1986 Cotton

Bowl. I think that the CBS team that produced the telecast from Dallas did an entirely inadequate job.

The broadcasting crew did not mention one single time during the telecast the down or the yards to go, and the down and yardage to go was never displayed on the screen. The viewer was left to keep track of the downs and yardage himself, not an easy task to do without the benefit of a scoreboard or a view of the referee sticks on the sidelines.

The camera angles used throughout the game were also poorly chosen. It is not easy to see the action of a play from the sideline shots that you presented. During the last 30 to 45 seconds of the game, the only shot seen was a view of Jackie Sherrill on the sidelines with his team. The viewer had to depend on the broadcaster's inadequate play-by-play announcements to find out that Texas A&M had indeed scored. The viewer never got to see the last A&M touchdown or the two-point conversion.

I feel that your telecast of the 1986 Cotton Bowl was far below the usual high standards seen in your coverage of professional football games and other sports events. It is unfortunate that the Aggie and Auburn fans were stuck with a third-rate broadcasting crew and director.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the return of the high quality sports coverage generally seen on CBS.

Michael Allmann

Just another 'State U'?

EDITOR:

About a year ago there was a lot of talk going on — big articles in *The Battalion* and letters on the Opinion Page — about Texas A&M striving to become a world-class university.

Then came the budget cuts for Texas and the governor's promise to save the state university system from any curtailment in funds, which he kept.

But Gov. White forgot about the students — the major portion and the purpose of Texas' postsecondary institutions. Tuition was raised and with it the potential for A&M to become a world-class university

was razed. We may beat t.u., but the Aggies will never have a great university.

How then can the regents hope to achieve the lofty status of premier university if out-of-state and international students are forced not only to pay upwards of \$2,000 more in tuition than Texas residents, but are allowed no means to pay that sum in installments? How can a university become world-class if it caters to a predominantly regional student body?

It seems to me that A&M is destined to become just another regional "State U" while the governor's alma mater, Baylor, achieves national and international acclaim.

William H. Clark II

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