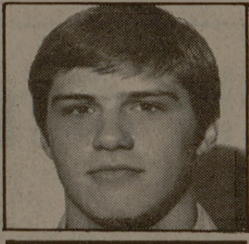


# Opinion

## SDI convenient high-tech alternative to arms talks

"Why walk when you can drive?" has become the battle cry of 20th century America. We love our technology, and we're willing to give up just about anything for our addiction — including world peace.



Loren Steffy

And why not? Technology has permeated every level of our society and has made us dependent on its assistance.

With the pull of a knob or the press of a remote-control button (you don't even have to leave your chair), we have instant entertainment. Movies are beamed to our homes, and the human actors in them are being replaced by robots, mechanical animals and computer-generated images.

If, by some catastrophe, a show is missed, we have VCRs to catch it and play it back, so we don't have to do without our technological pacifiers.

America's mechanized society is becoming a self-perpetuating world of high technology. When technology collapses, man feels helpless. If the cable goes out in the middle of "Hill Street Blues,"

nationwide panic ensues. If the car breaks down, we miss class or work — walking is out of the question.

Physical exertion is acceptable only when it comes in clearly labeled packages called fitness — aerobics, jogging, racquetball, weight-lifting. Never could walking merely to get where you're going be considered a workout.

Why rely on human abilities when technology can do it for us? It's an old theme, but one that keeps turning up — most recently in Reykjavik, Iceland.

The recent sort-of summit chats between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev produced impressive arms reduction proposals by both superpowers, but Strategic Defense Initiative proved to be too big a chip for the Soviets to knock off Reagan's shoulder.

Like those of us who never consider walking when we could drive, Reagan has become so accustomed to the dream of space-shield technology that he would never leave the bargaining table without it.

Analysts and critics are saying the superpower meeting was unproductive, but it did give perspective to the U.S. position. As long as we have tech-

nology to protect us, we'll bypass negotiating on a human level.

What's even more unsettling is that in Star Wars we have transcended our confidence in existing technology. Not only are we sure of what we can build now, we are willing to stake national security on what we'll be doing 15 or 20 years from now. Like the issue of Popular Mechanics from the '50s that predicted a Hovercraft in every American garage by 1967, this is little more than scientific speculation.

The Reagan administration sees — perhaps wisely — that SDI is a powerful ace in the hole when it comes time to put the nuclear cards on the table. The Soviets, too, have their technological crutches — including their answer to SDI — which they don't want to part with. We need to be careful not to show our hand before they show theirs.

But we also cannot ignore how the weapons system debate dissolves the human element in arms negotiations. No longer do we have to come to terms with our runaway nuclear stockpiles. Star Wars is our safety valve for leaving the table without a handshake. If the Soviets won't negotiate on our terms, we can wait. In a few years we'll be safely nestled behind a wall of laser beams, mir-

rored satellites and interceptor missiles — snug as a microchip in a high-tech rug.

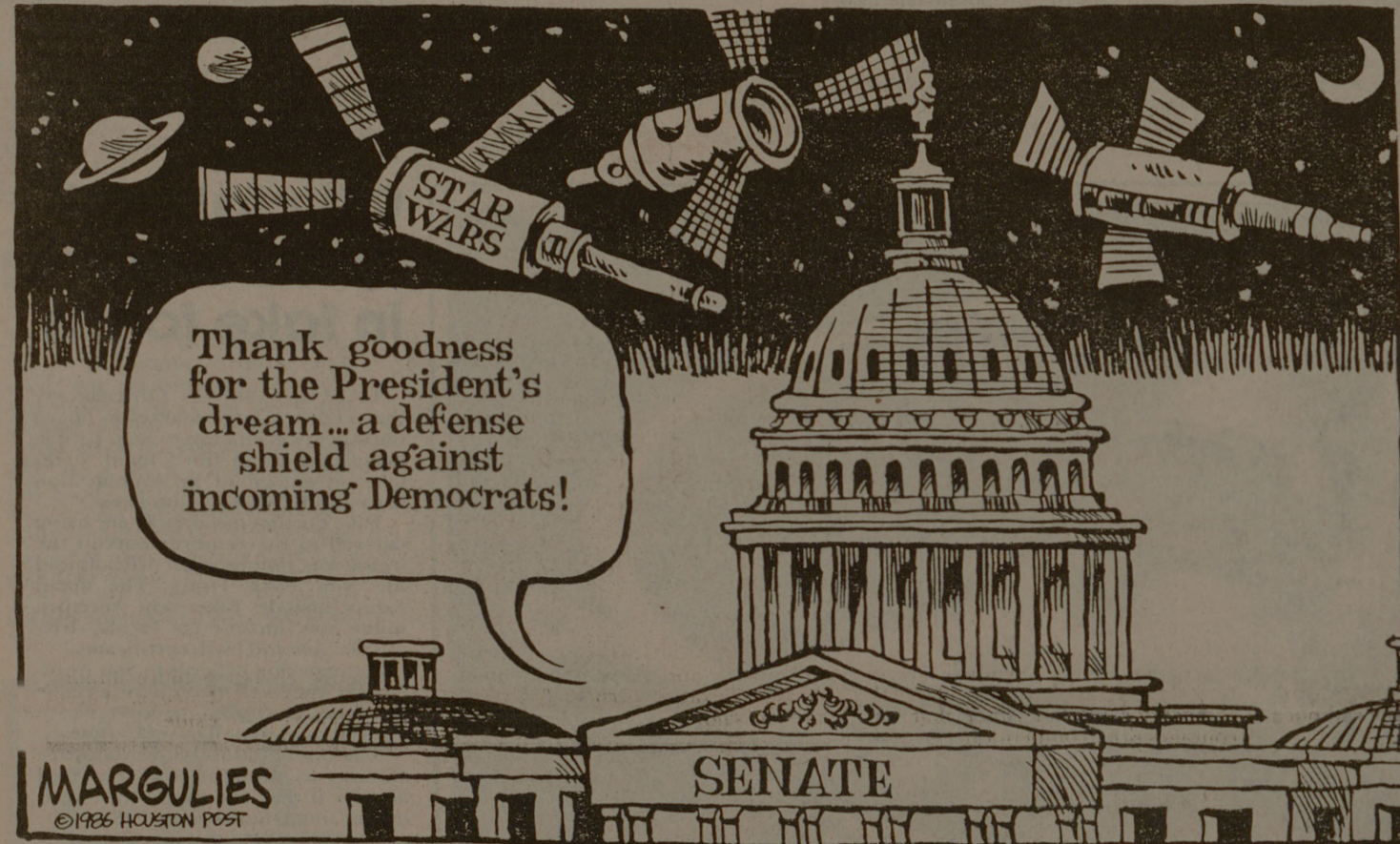
So what's the problem? Our technological advancements always have protected us in the past although they break down from time to time, they do a good job overall. But in nuclear exchanges one high-tech faux pas is all it takes.

Reagan's why-talk-when-you-can-build-a-space-shield approach to negotiations overlooks a vital point. Like the person who would rather dance than walk, it lets the human capabilities become flabby. If we fail to reach agreements with the Soviets now, we may not be able to later.

If the only language we can speak is laser beams and space shields, we may find ourselves on the brink of a nuclear Armageddon, with our muscle ballyhooed technology pushing us ever nearer the end.

The journey back from destruction can only be made by human means — person to person, disc to disc or warhead to warhead. And if we spend all our time driving now, we may be in for a very long walk later.

Loren Steffy is a senior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor for The Battalion.



MARGULIES ©1986 HOUSTON POST

SENATE

## Leading the crusade for right to be clumsy

I felt sorry for Nancy Reagan when I heard she fell out of her chair in the East Room of the White House. She was listening to her husband, the president, say nice things about Vladimir Horowitz, the piano player, who had just given a recital.

Lewis Grizzard

I bring this up as a part of my continuing crusade to help those poor clumsy individuals — like myself — who fall down a lot.

These people are terribly misunderstood and often have to face unwarranted humiliation. Although it is 1986, and we have become much more sensitive to people with certain defects, many of us still harbor prejudices against those who fall down.

Falling down when you are a child is OK. We expect children to fall down. But when you reach the age of uprightness — that is, when the girls in your class have started wearing training bras — falling down becomes something to avoid at all times.

Falling down is terribly embarrassing. Falling down — even on a pair of skis while trying to get down a steep slope without killing yourself — indicates to bemused onlookers a certain sign of weakness.

Once, I saw a woman fall down in a department store. It was Christmas and she was carrying many packages.

Everybody in the store stopped to look at the red-faced woman, who quickly gathered herself and her packages and began walking away.

Just then, a wisecracker said to the woman, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but you have to go back to where you fell."

"Why on earth?" she asked. "Because," the smart aleck, like a frustrated football referee, replied, "that's where your knee touched the ground."

I fell down once in a supermarket, was carrying a jar of mayonnaise at the time. A kid said to his mother, "Look Mom, that man fell down." Then the kid began laughing.

I would have thrown the jar of mayonnaise at the little brat, but it had been broken during my fall. I had mayonnaise in my hair. I had mayonnaise in my shoes. "My attorneys will hear about this," screamed at the top of my voice as I ran out of the supermarket, which was the only way I figured I could leave without having to pay for the broken jar of mayonnaise.

Nancy Reagan isn't the only famous person who has fallen. Gerald Ford, who used to be president, fell all the time. You can't have a president who falls, and I am certain that's the reason Ron Ford lost the White House to Jimmy Carter in 1976.

Not only that, but Chevy Chase had a comedic career pretending he was Gerald Ford on television and falling down while a nation laughed at his fool head.

Being prone to falling is a horrible affliction and should not be laughed at, can happen to anybody.

Besides, Nancy Reagan couldn't have avoided what happened to her.

Not only had she sat through a Vladimir Horowitz recital, she also had to listen to violinist Itzhak Perlman and pianist Yo-Yo Ma.

If that isn't enough to knock you out of your chair, I don't know what is.

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## Political process doesn't exclude students

As citizens of the United States, we have the right to be involved in the political process. We have the right to voice our political opinions, to debate in a public forum, to criticize the opinions of others regardless of their authority and to support and vote for the political candidate of our choice. Yes, America surely is the "land of the free."

Mike Sims  
Guest Columnist

rather sacrifice these in favor of some other political package. Students that are concerned about abortion, whether they be on the "anti-abortion" side or on the "pro-choice" side should investigate which political candidate supports the view that he or she has taken.

Even such abstract and distant issues as aid to the Nicaraguan rebels may ultimately affect the college student in terms of perhaps someday being called upon for a more direct intervention in that country's affairs. The student cannot afford to be apathetic with regard to these issues.

Who gets elected to whatever governing body to represent us as citizens of the United States and as students at Texas A&M should be of enough importance to motivate more of us to become more actively involved in the political process.

This may mean just knowing the issues and voting for the candidate that best conforms to our ideology. This would be the simplest fulfillment of our social obligation.

The more aggressive of us (and those with a little bit more time) also should actively campaign for our "chosen" candidate. Informed political involvement does make a difference in the long run. We can determine our own future welfare by the vote we cast.

Fortunately, our involvement in the political process does not end on elec-

tion day. Even if our candidate does not get elected we still should be concerned about what transpires on Capitol Hill. Our interest in these affairs can be expressed by writing letters to our congressman, encouraging friends to become more politically active and attending functions on campus that might lead to increasing one's knowledge of the issues. There are so many ways that one might become involved in government. Many times all it takes is just a little bit of imagination and some self-motivation.

As a matter of fact, an opportunity exists presently for students to become involved in supporting a political candidate. The race for the 6th District congressional seat has been labeled a "toss-up" election. This is the perfect time for students to learn about the issues facing them and to act upon their personal political desires.

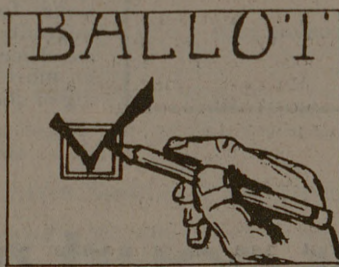
Being debated in this particular election are such topics as the importance of

education over a balanced budget, investment, small business versus big business and nuclear disarmament. These are issues that will affect us, if not in the present, then certainly in the near future.

Since we are the leaders of the next decade, we must be prepared to face intelligently and pragmatically these issues with solutions. Right now, we can help by being aware of the issues and becoming involved in the election process — either actively campaigning or simply voting.

A&M students often have been characterized as being politically apathetic. I am not so sure of this. In fact, I have confidence that we are not mindless automatons simply here to get a piece of paper with the University insignia at the top. All it takes is some interest in the world around you and the realization that you can make a difference.

Mike Sims is a senior agricultural education major and student body president.



## Mail Call

### Unjustified abuse

EDITOR:

As a Christian, I strongly protest Karl Pallmeyer's slur of Pat Robertson and other politically active Christian leaders (Thursday's *Battalion*). I see nothing in either Robertson or Jerry Falwell that differ with what the Bible says. Pallmeyer's abuse is unjustified and erroneous.

For example, he said that God takes no interest in politics. If that's so, why did he destroy the people who opposed Moses and, later on, all of the wicked kings of Israel and Judah? The Bible also speaks about the need for righteous leaders in Proverbs. Besides, if the righteous don't rule, who will? The unrighteous! I use the Bible's definition of righteousness, since it's the only one that counts.

I also must differ with Pallmeyer's inference that Robertson's followers have no minds of their own. The Bible does say to honor authority, but never follow a leader blindly. We should obey a leader as we would obey God, so if a leader disobeys God, we need not obey him. Please don't make Robertson look like Jim Jones. I have a mind of my own and I choose to follow God and Pat Robertson.

James E. Sexton '88

### Trash on the shelves

EDITOR:

Just recently I was browsing in the current periodical section of the Sterling C. Evans Library when I accidentally came across a magazine called *The Advocate*.

What I found it contained totally shocked me. It was a magazine promoting homosexuality. Much worse, it contained explicit photos of this type of societal incompetence. When I inquired at the main desk as to why trash like this was allowed to be put on the shelves, I was told that people complained about having it removed.

I told them it would be best for society's sake to have trash like that removed from the shelves. It is immoral both in the Lord's eyes and in society's eyes to have trash like that even published. If periodicals like that are allowed to be displayed in the library, then why aren't *Penthouse* and *Playboy*?

Robert D. Farrell

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Playboy* is available in the Current Periodicals Department, but it is kept behind the counter.

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

### The Battalion

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Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

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