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Letters

Missile defense visions

Our brilliant scientists have been trapped into viewing Reagan's missile defense proposal as a technical challenge and rejecting it as unfeasible ("Is Reagan's 'Vision' of Missile Defense Possible?" SN: 4/2/83, p. 212). What it is is a moral question: whether to add a new intellectual dimension to the nightmarish strategic games indulged in by think tanks and national laboratories or to learn how to scale down those games and their physical instruments, the missile systems themselves. After all, someone *may* come up with a feasible approach and wouldn't they look silly, but that isn't the problem.

The greater and more relevant challenge to world scientists is that issued by Pope John Paul II: to withhold their critical contribution to war-making and join other humanitarians in enriching rather than threatening culture.

J.S. Schaul
Caldwell, N.J.

Your critique of President Reagan's missile defense program omitted any mention or discussion of one of the most promising and readily available means of missile defense.

Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham was formerly

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Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and was military adviser to Mr. Reagan during his presidential campaign. The "High Frontier" study which he headed was the work of thirty-two of the nation's most eminent scientists and strategists.

Surely an impartial and objective review would give due attention to this proposal. It is not only extremely effective militarily, but can be implemented with presently available methods at a cost far less than that of some of the more exotic proposals.

Henry F. Williams
Cincinnati, Ohio

Even the proponents of Pres. Reagan's Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) proposal admit that the idea is years, perhaps decades, away from realization. Yet your report quotes scientists of questionable authority who are willing to utter dogmatic statements concerning the ultimate workability of such a system. At this stage of the discussion, such assertions are more likely to be based upon a priori political assumptions than upon sober scientific analysis.

Elsewhere in the same issue, you report at length on the prospects for continued exchange of scientific and technical information between the superpowers. Yet ironically you make no

mention in the BMD article about the idea that the US and the USSR might cooperate in BMD development, as both Pres. Reagan and Secretary Weinberger have suggested. Also, you ignore the possibility that a strategy based upon true defense is inherently more humane than the current doctrine based upon the threat of mass retaliation.

The lack of balance displayed thus far in your reportage of this complex issue is disturbing, especially in a publication of deservedly high reputation.

Thomas B. Albrecht
Lawrence, Kan.

Metrication omission

It seemed strange to me that your article "Machine Tools: Symptom of America's Waning Competitive Edge" (SN: 3/12/83, p. 168) never mentioned the metrication issue. I believe there is a lingering notion on the part of many foreign consumers that Americans can only think in inches and degrees Fahrenheit — unlike virtually all of the rest of the world. They look at a staunch American opponent of metrication and think: "Would you buy a machine tool from this man?"

Robert G. Quayle
Asheville, N.C.

