

Letters

Chayes-Wiesner Report Challenged

The Chayes-Wiesner report (16 May, p. 807) criticizing the Safeguard ABM system is of such questionable quality that some comments must be made. Many of the relevant data are (unfortunately) classified, and arguments based upon such data inevitably degenerate into exchanges of the "So I say—So you say" type. I therefore eschew refutations based upon classified information and restrict myself to some more general comments:

1) According to the Chayes-Wiesner report, Secretary of Defense Laird's assertions (that the Soviets seek "superiority" or first-strike "counterforce" capability over the United States) are "not based on any intelligence about new weapons systems" but are, instead, merely his reinterpretations of older data that were not previously viewed with much alarm. Actually, of course, new intelligence has come in during the last year, but the key point—evidently overlooked by the report—is that earlier estimates of Soviet intentions optimistically assumed that their extremely rapid missile deployment was only aimed at achieving parity with the United States, not superiority. Unfortunately, in the past year the assumed leveling-off point has been passed, yet Soviet deployment continues unabated. Ergo, it is probable that they seek superiority after all.

2) The report asserts that we can afford to delay Safeguard because the Soviets will face a long "lead-time" in developing and deploying any new systems. Actually, the Soviet systems of such concern to Secretary Laird are already developed and even deployed in large numbers. That lead-time is already gone.

3) I was startled by the recommendation that Safeguard *not* be deployed because each of its components "is at the extreme of sophistication for its

type." Does this mean that the authors would have been more favorably inclined if Safeguard were already obsolete? Its advanced technology undoubtedly will require much time for debugging, especially with respect to integration of its components, which is one more reason for avoiding unnecessary delay in deployment.

4) It is almost embarrassing to find the F-111 (TFX) listed among alleged Pentagon bloopers. Military men mostly opposed that system; it was passed anyway by civilian "experts" under then Secretary of Defense McNamara, during the Kennedy Administration whose science adviser was—remember?—Jerome B. Wiesner.

5) Many of the report's arguments conflict with each other. For example, it is asserted that: (i) Even China will be able to penetrate the Spartan-only defense of our cities with ease; (ii) Safeguard will escalate the arms race, implying that even the Soviets will so respect the Spartan-only defense that they will fear it represents an attempt to erode their second-strike capability; (iii) the Spartan-plus-Sprint defense of our missiles will not increase the credibility of our second-strike capability, which implies that the Soviets will be so contemptuous of the combined system that they will feel certain they can penetrate it with nearly 100 percent efficiency in a very brief time (anything less will not save them from U.S. retaliation, and Safeguard will have "worked"). Make up your minds, boys: Is Safeguard bad because the Spartan defense won't even work against China or because it might even work against the Soviets; because the U.S.S.R. won't respect the system or because they will?

Though I favor Safeguard deployment, there are unquestionably many technological points that may be legitimately debated. Unfortunately, this hastily compiled report contains enough flaws and inconsistencies, many ob-

vious even to intelligent laymen, that it is apt to damage the credibility of the scientific community more than it will damage the credibility of Safeguard.

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Real Estate Invasion

The report (6 June, p. 1152) of the planned real estate development of a housing subdivision within the proposed national monument at the famous Florissant fossil beds in central Colorado motivated people in the departments of zoology, botany, entomology, and geology at the University of Kentucky, as well as professional biologists at several other universities in this state, to write members of the Kentucky delegation in Congress concerning this matter. Normally, professional people do not like to get involved in matters of this sort, but it is we who are most qualified to evaluate problems in our special areas of competence, and I believe we should feel obligated to advise our representatives.

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Both Sides of "the Gap"

It is no surprise to find Margaret Mead getting her come-uppance from her peers; but the surprise is that it is coming so soon (Letters, 13 June). In her review of Kaj Birket-Smith's *The Paths of Culture* [*Natur. Hist.* 74, 7 (December 1965)], she took him strongly to task for clinging to "views prevalent in the 1920's," as if all previous wisdom could be thus lightly tossed aside. At the time I thought there might come a day when even Mead would be categorized for extolling some liberal dictum "popular in the 1960's" so that she might remain within the inner sanctum of the establishment of which she felt herself a part.

Her request for the younger generation to come to her defense is pathetic. Wisdom and foolishness claim no age boundaries. The kind of young people she has been defending lately have