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LETTERS

Equity and Economics

William D. Carey, in his editorial on budget cuts in science "The threshold of pain: Coping with frugality" (27 Feb., p. 879), is quite wrong in stating that "What lies at the heart of the whole matter is the question of equity." Few if any of our fellow citizens will ever ask that science be cut in the name of "equity." They have the common sense to know that the future of science is inextricably linked with both the national economy and the national security. Science is part of the solution, not the problem.

And if science were excessively funded, little enough could be saved in any case. Above all, these cuts have taken place without any consultation with a government science apparatus much less a science adviser.

If the Reagan Administration succeeds this year—or in the coming years—in pulling up important roots of science just to be "equitable," we shall all be the worse off for it. In such circumstances, scientists would be foolish not to defend science; they would betray not so much the interests of their colleagues as the interests of their fellow citizens and of their country. With this in mind, the Federation of American Scientists—which is not now and never has been a trade union for science—is planning to watch events closely and to react from time to time. Scientists are encouraged to write to us as events develop.

JEREMY J. STONE

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AAAS will be heard from when rumors are superseded by fact and the danger can be assessed responsibly and with a sense of proportion.

—WILLIAM D. CAREY

The MX Question

I want to both commend and criticize Eliot Marshall's article (News and Comment, 13 Feb., p. 681) that resulted from his interview with me. Generally the article is excellent and quite accurately represents my views. However, in the discussion of the MX missile, there are two errors of fact. The first is the assertion by an anonymous "submarine fan" that I overstated the weakness of submarines and that the Navy got a retraction

of one of my statements. I have *not* retracted any statements that I actually made about submarine vulnerability, although I have occasionally corrected misquotes or misinterpretations of what I said. I challenge the "submarine fan" to produce the retraction he claims the Navy got. If I am going to be accused of being inaccurate and unfair, the person making that value judgment should be identified as well as the statements he is criticizing.

The second error is the bald assertion that I played the good soldier despite my private misgivings about the MX plan. I consider this a serious allegation, and yet it is offered lightly, almost as if it were a compliment, and without a shred of evidence, almost as if it were self-evident. It is, in fact, not true. I proposed the MX program to the Administration, and it is therefore a complete distortion of fact to suggest that my subsequent support of it was done only out of a sense of duty. I consider myself an "arms control advocate" and find that position perfectly compatible with being an MX supporter.

Marshall also suggests I have become "flexible" on the MX question, and that I now believe we could give up on land-based missiles and expand our submarine missile forces. My views on that question are the same as they have been for several years. I believe it is best to maintain a survivable land-based missile force. If for any reason that is not done, the second-best plan is to expand our submarine-based missile force. I have testified many times that there are no technical reasons against expanding our Trident force or adding a SUM-like system to our Trident force (although it is a delusion to think that either of these alternatives would be cheaper than MX). I prefer an MX solution because I am concerned that we cannot be positive that we can maintain forever the present invulnerability of the submarine forces, particularly if we allow the Soviets to concentrate on that problem. Thus I am neither an "MX fan" nor a "submarine fan." I believe our best security lies in maintaining a diversity of survivable land-basing and survivable sea-basing for our missile forces.

WILLIAM J. PERRY

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I regret having understated Perry's enthusiasm for the land-based MX missile system, and I am glad he has taken the opportunity to demonstrate that his zeal was not that of a "good soldier" but of a true believer.