

## LETTERS

### Pentagon Decision-Making

R. Jeffrey Smith, in his article "Pentagon decision-making comes under fire" (News and Comment, 4 Jan., p. 32), describes the results of problems that are not new, not unique to the Reagan Administration, and whose causes are not fully discussed. The system has changed some since I was heavily involved, both as a staff member and as one of the voting members of the Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council (DSARC). However, I have kept in touch with participants and believe the following comments are correct.

Procedures are not the basic problems. Rather, they are lack of support from the top, imprudent (but understandable) deference to the uniformed services, and lack of accountability. The office now called Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E, once known as Systems Analysis) was set up to provide critical independent analysis of all aspects of the defense program. The PA&E staff papers prepared for the director of PA&E before the DSARC meetings have (at least in the past) covered exactly what Smith describes as not being available at those meetings: gaps in available information, weaknesses in cost estimations, flaws in the rationale supporting the system, and probably the latest intelligence on threats the system is designed to face. However, if these issues are raised at DSARC meetings, the service that is proposing the weapon system will artfully argue they know better, at least implicitly arguing that the real military know far more about weapons and war than do the civilians of PA&E. But PA&E analysis incorporates the insights and knowledge of junior officers, who are closer to current operations than are the generals and admirals who decide the service positions. With rare exceptions, the DSARC members defer to "military judgement" or the confidence of the technologists that a system is needed, will be built for the amount estimated, and will have the performance described.

Such imprudent deference is driven by two factors. First, the Secretary of Defense (and the Department of Defense's internal chief operating officer, the Deputy Secretary) do not support challenges to the prevailing service wisdom. It takes interest, good intuition, and courage (knowledge helps) to decide in favor of a young civilian analyst over the bemedaled chief of a service (or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff). If the people at

the top do not back up those who ask tough questions, the questioners eventually remain silent (or are silenced). Second, no one is held responsible for the problems Smith mentions. When schedules slip, costs are much higher, performance is degraded, or the system just won't work, no one is held accountable. Program managers have moved on, senior service people have been promoted or retired, civilian leaders have left. Even when the responsible people are still in their jobs, no one makes them take responsibility. When the costs of a system increase drastically, or a system that should have been tested before production turns out to be a lemon, Congress and the press berate the "Defense Department," or the "defense establishment," or "the Administration." But they do not criticize the DSARC members, the Secretary or Deputy Secretary, or the chief congressional sponsors.

The analysts are not always right and frequently may see only a piece of the many factors that go into a decision. However, 20 years of experience indicate to me that the people asking the embarrassing questions have been much more accurate in predicting costs, performance, schedule, and the threat than have been the senior officers and program advocates. Perhaps the procedures need changing. But without attention and support at the top, accountability for those who make and recommend decisions, and an attitude by the DSARC members that encourages tough questions, insists on answers, and takes a skeptical approach to the advocates, the problems Smith describes will not be solved.

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### Global Energy Study

We would like to counter some impressions that may have been sown by David Dickson's article (News and Comment, 4 Jan., p. 34) about our analysis of *Energy in a Finite World*, the major study by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

Some, including the director of the IIASA study as quoted in Dickson's article, say that our aim is to resurrect the well-worn "soft" versus "hard" energy conflict, thus rallying all non-"soft" people to the study's side. In fact, we have always made very clear that our analysis was independent of the substantive posi-

tions in the energy debate and supported or opposed neither "side." To say otherwise is to obscure the deeper criticisms we have made.

The IIASA study was a large-scale research program involving more than 140 scientists and many millions of dollars. Our detailed analysis of the work has revealed serious flaws and inconsistencies that not only bring the conclusions of the study into question, but also are difficult to reconcile with the widely published accounts of the work. As for the project director's statement that our analysis reflects a misunderstanding of the distinction between "craft" (systems analysis) and "science," a major part of our analysis was actually devoted to this distinction and to the confusions created in this regard by the study's own inconsistent self representation.

Overall, our findings bear indirectly on the substance of the energy issue; but they point directly to the inadequate processes of peer review and quality control in the field of policy analysis modeling, which appears to want the authority of science without being subject to its disciplines. These are problems that go beyond specific energy arguments or specific institutions. It is surely to IIASA's credit that our critical analysis was able to be performed there, we hope to the advancement of policy analysis and policy-making.

A concise summary of our more detailed papers in *Policy Sciences* (1) appeared in *Nature* (2).

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#### References

1. B. Keepin, *Policy Sciences* 17, 199 (1984); B. Wynne, *ibid.*, p. 277.
2. B. Keepin and B. Wynne, *Nature (London)* 312, 691 (1984).

### Development and the Market Process

Gerard Piel, in his editorial "Let them eat cake" (26 Oct., p. 393), criticizes the argument by U.S. representatives at the second United Nations conference on population in August in Mexico City that "intervention by the state must not be allowed to inhibit the response of sufficiently motivated entrepreneurs" to help solve the economic and population problems of developing countries. He says