

letters

Defense budget debate

I agree with your editorial statement (January, page 136) that the magnitude of the defense budget (as well as any other part of the federal budget) should be open to public debate. But I do not believe your editorial helped this debate because your discussion of the economic issues contained so many inaccuracies.

For instance, the proposed defense expenditures for FY 1980 are only 23.7% of the federal budget, not 40% as you claimed ($\$125.8 \text{ billion} \div \$531.6 \text{ billion} = 0.2366$). On top of this, you neglected to

mention the \$277 billion outlay for welfare or "human resources" program in the proposed budget (\$291 billion if aid to communities and revenue sharing are included). In fact, data from the Office of Management and Budget shows that human-resources funding has been significantly greater than defense spending for this entire decade, culminating by being a factor of 2.32 greater than the defense expenditures (\$260 billion to \$112 billion) in the FY 1979 budget. The inescapable conclusion is that, contrary to your claim, defense spending does not strain our economy nearly as much as welfare spending. For the record, my information comes from the January 22 and 29 issues of *U.S. News and World Report*.

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2/3/79

The 40% figure quoted in the editorial was taken (see figure) from the new book by the Boston Study Group mentioned in the editorial (the correct title of the book is *The Price of Defense*). Readers should be aware that the \$260 billion for human resources presented in *U.S. News and World Report* includes roughly \$100 billion for social security and close to \$20 billion for veterans' benefits. The social-security money, of course, is collected directly from taxpayers earnings and paid back to them from a trust fund. In the analysis by the Boston Study Group, social security funds were excluded from the total budget and veterans' benefits were included in the defense budget.

The Editor

Dress for working physicists

I found myself amused and aroused to comment by a picture of D. Allan Bromley (January, page 35). He appears to be dressed in a tuxedo, with a white handkerchief peeking out of his breast pocket. Surrounded by massive apparatus, he is "checking the alignment of the apparatus before a run."

The April 1977 issue of *PHYSICS TODAY* showed Robert Adair, dressed quite differently, soldering his apparatus at Brookhaven National Laboratory. The title on that cover was "Image of the Physicist." Inside the issue was the farewell report of William A. Fowler, retiring APS president. He commented at

million dollars	
Military: Current plus Veterans plus Retired pay	127.2
Interest on debts	39.7
Individual income supplements (includes medical costs)	73.0
Revenue sharing and Regional development	15.9
Law, Justice, Government	7.7
Commerce and Transport	19.3
Agriculture, Energy, Environment HEW Grants Resources, Science, Space, Technology	40.3
All other	12.8
TOTAL	\$336.

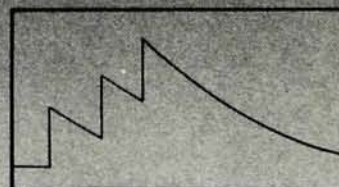
Federal expenditures for FY 1978. Analysis excludes direct transfer from social-security trust funds to social-security recipients.

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