



An Open Letter to the American Physical Society

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American Physical Society
335 East 45th St.
New York, N.Y. 10017

Re: *New York Times* report, April 23

Dear Sir:

I am pained to read in the *New York Times*, that the American Physical Society will be used to conduit misleading political propaganda, disguised as science, against the development of a U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). It is sadly appropriate that such a report should be conveyed through the same *New York Times* which pronounced unworkable the electric light, powered flight, and rocket-flight above the atmosphere.

The question of physical principles has been settled satisfactorily. The doubts which I have seen expressed by putative scientists on this matter, are of the same general species of scientific merit as the assurances given to us at the beginning of this century, and even later, by Rayleigh, von Kármán, and others, that Bernhard Riemann's prescriptions for the conditions of transonic powered flight were bad physics.

The problems of actually developing successful measures of ballistic missile defense, are chiefly those of an adequate level of funding of research and development, whose upper limit is more or less determined by the constricted number of professionals qualified for such work. In 1982 I estimated an annual level of between \$7–9 billion to be appropriate for perfecting prototypes of basic weaponry, and a level of between \$35–40 billion annually for a combined development and deployment program. The question of "scientific feasibility" is no longer a question of principles of physics; it is a practical question, which should be posed in terms of the impact of those, or lesser magnitudes of expenditure upon rates of progress.

The situation with AIDS research is comparable. The AIDS pandemic is in relatively small proportion a matter of medical research, and overwhelmingly a matter of biological research. We are spending, internationally, disgustingly little on relevant biological research, and are actually cutting back on the most promising avenues of biological research, the optical biophysics of non-linear spectroscopy. There is a parallel between the feasibility of a BMD based on what arms-control jargon terms “new physical principles,” and the feasibility of the human race’s surviving the presently rapid spread of the rapidly evolving “AIDS” virus. In both instances, if we fail to spend enough on the right spectrum of research activities, the goals of neither could be realized.

If the pacifist consciences of some physicists make work on any sort of weapons-system abhorrent to them, let them speak politically on this matter, and not distort physics wishfully for a political purpose. If they wish “alternative service,” let them turn their eyes to optical biophysics, a field which carries us way beyond molecular biology, and which is one of the most challenging and useful to any really serious, gifted professional looking for breakthroughs along new frontiers.

Let them grasp the point, that AIDS now poses a greater threat to humanity than a balanced estimate would assign to the prospect of an actual thermonuclear war. Indeed, if we develop an SDI soon enough, a thermonuclear war is virtually excluded.

Obscurity is heavily populated with mobs of supposed experts who avowed the absolute impossibility of that which workers of more impassioned competence have contributed. Perhaps, the pacifists include some otherwise gifted persons; if so, to those, I emphasize again: Consider the new frontiers of optical biophysics; here is an area in which good physicists are invaluable, and could make a substantial contribution to the survival of the human species.

Sincerely,
Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.