The CPSR Newsletter

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NSC-68

America enters the cold war

The official U.S. theory of the cold war was first advanced in 1950, in the legendary National Security Memorandum 68. This historic document is titled "The Report By The Secretaries Of State And Defense On 'United States Objectives And Programs For National Security,' April 7, 1950", but is called simply NSC-68. It deserves to be included in standard American dictionaries, in the back by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It was the opening shot of the cold war. The report was produced by a classified policy review presided over by Paul Nitze, at the direction of Secretary of State Dean Acheson. The goal of the review was to raise the consciousness of the Soviet threat among the national security community.

According to NSC-68, "... the Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world. Conflict has, therefore, become endemic...." NSC-68 also said that "The only deterrent we can present to the Kremlin is the evidence we give that we may make any of the critical points which we cannot hold the occasion for a global war of annihilation." In other words, our at to play nuclear chicken is an indispensable part of our defense.

The report sent a shock of alarm through the national security community; exactly the sort of shock that you would expect would be caused by the revelation of endemic conflict and nuclear threat to a nation that had thought it was at peace. Charles Murphy, Truman's principal policy adviser, says of his reaction that: "What I read scared me so much that the next day I didn't go to the office at all. I sat at home and read this memorandum over and over."

After describing the rules of the game, NSC-68 prescribed its strategy, which it called "containment". This strategy, the report explained, "is one which seeks by all means short of war to 1) block further expansion of Soviet power, 2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions, 3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin's control and influence and 4) in general, so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted international standards." The report said that steep increases in the military budget were necessary to "check and roll back the Kremlin's drive for world domination". To distinguish this strategy from Washington's previous strategy, which was also called containment but consisted only of political and economic methods like the Marshall plan, the NSC-68 strategy is sometimes called ntainment militarism".

NSC-68 warned against nuclear arms control, saying that it would "result in a relatively greater disarmament of the United States than of the Soviet Union". It recommended that hydrogen bombs be produced and stockpiled, if they proved technically feasible. Its strategy was to pursue nuclear superiority. One idea that was floating around at the time was that America should announce a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons, but NSC-68 rejected the idea, arguing that such an announcement would be interpreted as "an admission of great weakness".

When the shock wave reached congress, there was a great debate. The Taft republicans objected to the expense, suggesting that Stalin's secret plan was to bankrupt us by panicking us into unnecessary military spending. They also criticized the administration for focusing its defense in Europe when the threatening curtain was advancing fastest in Asia. The fundamental assumptions of NSC-68 were not seriously questioned, and when the partisan politics settled down, a cold war consensus had been forged.

Greg Nelson
Palo Alto

Spreading Concern

During the first part of this century, technology was seen by most people as essentially beneficial to mankind. Although the destructive power of military tools grew during those years, it was primarily the military who were at risk as a result. The rest of us sat complacently at home enjoying the advent of the automobile, the airplane, radio, television, etc. Then, approximately coincident with the development of the atomic bomb, there commenced a period of increasing disenchantment in which thoughtful people began to express concern that technology was getting out of control.

(cont'd on page 2)

The CPSR newsletter is published quarterly by:

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility
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P.O. Box 717
Palo Alto, CA 94301.

The purpose of this publication is to keep members informed of relevant thought and activity in our organization. In this first issue you will find content ranging from social and political analysis to news from the local chapters. While much of the material here was contributed by members in the Palo Alto area, we hope that other members will be inspired to contribute material of their own to the future issues of this journal. Thank you all for making CPSR what it is.

Concern

(cont'd from page 1)

Within a brief thirty years we have reached the frightening point where a small number of powerful men now have the power to destroy hundreds of millions of lives more or less "at the push of a button". The problem is no longer one for future generations; it has arrived on our doorstep, and there is no longer any place to which one can escape in safety.

It is unfortunate that, until recently, we the public have made little effort to inform ourselves about nuclear problems and policies. The difficulties involved and the dimensions of the horror are so great that we feel impotent and therefore retreat to hoping that our leaders will somehow find a way to avoid killing us all. This plays directly into the hands of a government often confused over what to do and not wanting to have to deal with public participation in debate over policy. The issues, we are told, are too complex for the lay person. But that sort of rhetoric is dangerous and should be challenged. Although those in charge have no doubt been trying to do what they think best, they seem to have failed badly since it is clear that today we are in substantially greater peril than ever before. The fundamental strategy whereby each side constantly tries to threaten the other with ever more and bigger weapons has long since revealed itself as not only ineffective but counter productive; for every bigger weapon one side produces, the other will produce a still bigger one.

It is almost certain that if a new approach is going to be forthcoming, it will have to be pressed upon a reluctant government through continued expressions of public concern. We have already seen some effect, but far more is needed if anything other than token actions are to occur. So the problem resolves itself to finding effective ways of getting people involved in the debate and of trying to guide debate into thoughtful and constructive channels.

Unfortunately simple concern isn't enough. It is likely to be uninformed and naive and so to have considerable potential for making matters worse rather than better. This is where our profession enters the picture. With modest effort at informing ourselves, we can help not only to arouse but also to inform others. We deal daily with complexity and our trade is one in which a premium is placed on novel approaches and careful strategy. The general public tends to view us as "wizards" of a sort, generally naive about, or disinterested in, social problems. On the other hand, we have technical knowledge and skills that many people do not have, and that makes us a potential resource, and provides us the credibility we need to be heard. People will listen if we use the same care in formulating and voicing our concerns that we use in our day-to-day work. Those who are genuinely worried and take even a little trouble to educate themselves and to formulate their concern, can communicate that concern to others - even if it is to only a few.

We all have friends and associates and one of the most important things that we can do is to take it upon ourselves to express our concerns openly and compellingly to those around us - in groups of all sizes - starting simply with friends and neighbors. People will listen and share concerns that speak straight from the heart. Getting people to admit that there is a problem, that it threatens and worries them, and to discuss practical alternatives to the escalating arms race are vital first steps. I believe very much in the "each one teach one" philosophy and that, to my mind, is what we must practice if we are going to survive.

Severo Ornstein
National Chairman

Technology and Responsibility

editorial

The other day I was riding my bicycle in the foothills overlooking Silicon Valley. It was early morning and a breeze cleared the air. At certain vantage points during my ride, I could see north to the San Mateo Bridge, which stretches across the San Francisco Bay, and as far south as the garlic fields of Morgan Hill and Gilroy. It was a spectacular view.

At the southern tip of the bay NASA has almost completed the world's largest wind tunnel. Its gray, steel and concrete hulk looms as a monument to technological achievement. Surrounding it are the aqua colored hangers of Moffet Field, the expanse of Lockheed, the Pentagon's communications hub known as the "Blue Cube", and, of course, the landfills and marshes along the bay.

Two days before my ride there had been a major earthquake in Coalinga, California. The town had been devastated.

I could not help but question the wisdom of people who des and construct such expensive, critical, and one-of-a-kind buildings on the soft mud of the baylands that rest on the edge of the San Andreas Fault. These are the people who are currently building our trillion dollar national defense program. It is unnerving, at the very least, to consider that the same Defense establishment that is flaunting its faith in high technology weapons systems has blessed the construction of such vital buildings on some of the most tenuous land on the planet.

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The CPSR Newsletter hopes to bring you ideas and news from individuals who, although involved in high technology, are not mesmerized by it. They question the unrelenting build-up of nuclear arms and its intricate dependence upon computer and computer-related systems.

Although CPSR is primarily focused on the computer professional's role in relation to the nuclear arms race, the very words "Social Responsibility" imply much more than mere opposition to the technology of war. As CPSR matures and the various project groups within each chapter evolve, we will have a better understanding of those key words: Social Responsibility.

Right now, the immediate and obvious problem that faces us is stopping the seemingly inexorable movement towards nuclear conflagration. Being familiar with technology, we have a

...sponsibility to alert others that it is not the panacea that we ...e led to believe. Becoming critically dependent upon technology for defense systems is as dangerous as building something in a marshland along an erathquake fault. Sooner or later it will give way.

Mark Hall

Chapter News

As we come together as an organization we will develop more efficient communications. At present, we are still forming chapters, electing officers, and determining chapter addresses. Because of this, our chapter news is limited in this issue. We hope this will have changed by the time our next issue goes to press. To this end we are requesting that the CPSR chapter secretaries submit a current activities list, including project committees, along with any local events that would be of interest to other CPSR members. Any articles or ideas will also be gratefully accepted. Please send them to: Editor, CPSR Newsletter, Box 717, Palo Alto, CA 94301.

East Bay: Bruce Joffe
127 Sunnyside Ave.
Piedmont, CA 94611

CPSR/East Bay meets regularly on every other Thursday at 7:30 for an agenda meeting, followed at 8:00 with a general meeting.

Boston: Steve Berlin
MIT AI Lab
545 Technology Square
Cambridge, MA 02139

CPSR/Boston meets in a general forum as needed. They have established task forces that meet regularly. Projects being worked on by the task-force groups include CPSR recruitment, media awareness, technical research, event planning, and a newsletter.

Palo Alto: David Caulkins
437 Mundel Way
Los Altos, CA 94022

CPSR/Palo Alto meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month at the First Presbyterian Church at Cowper and Lincoln in Palo Alto. Between 25 and 60 people have attended the meetings.

Project groups have been active in the area setting up booths at trade shows and conferences, writing opinion pieces for the general media, and establishing a study group for the purpose of developing course material.

Seattle: Gloria Black
PO Box 85481
Seattle, WA 98105

CPSR/Seattle holds monthly public meetings that are open to the public. A recent meeting that focused on the topic of Computer Reliability During a Nuclear War was reported in the daily SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER.

Members of the Seatle chapter have written an article on a similar subject for the newsletter of Educators for Social Responsibility. They also provided material to the Women's Peace Camp.

Dr. Alan Borning, President of CPSR Seattle and a faculty member in the University of Washington's Computer Science Department, along with other members of CPSR Seattle, is preparing an article on computer reliability for *The Communications of the ACM*.

Madison: Jeffrey D. Myers
Dept. of Computer Sciences
University of Wisconsin - Madison
1210 West Dayton St.
Madison, WI 53706

Look for more about Madison next issue.

San Jose: Jack Kroll
PO Box 53197
San Jose, CA 95153-0197

CPSR/San Jose holds an 11:30 lunch meeting on the 4th Thursday of every month.

Lessons Learned

In April of this year, Palo Alto became the first chapter of CPSR, Inc. Those of us in the San Francisco Bay area have been meeting twice each month since June of 1982. While we're still cutting a path for ourselves in many ways, there are some lessons learned during the last year that might be useful to other CPSR chapters, or to people working to start chapters. Our primary goal has been to learn about the arms race and begin to provide the public with information on the role that computers play in nuclear weapon systems. Along the way, however, we've learned some things about the business of organizing as well.

Computers and Nuclear Weapons

After some initial debate, we've found it useful to distinguish between CPSR as a place for discussion among ourselves, and CPSR as a source of information for others through public statements about the arms race. As a place for internal discussion, CPSR provides us with a forum for any talk about the arms race and its implications, however preliminary or basic. Many of us feel the need to strengthen our general knowledge of the history and politics of the arms race, about which we know comparatively little. We are concerned with the underlying morality of technologies designed for global warfare, and with possible alternatives for settling international disputes. We need a place to debate just what it is that we understand by the terms "social responsibility", now and in the future. Apart from the question of how we focus our public statements and commentary, any of these concerns is fair game for

internal debate.

With respect to public statements, our decision has been to comment specifically on the role that computers play in nuclear weapon systems and strategy. We focus on the role of computers not because we think that computer technology (or technology in general) is the problem with the arms race, but because we think that there must be a challenge to the claim that more weapons make us more secure. A technical argument is one component of that challenge, and scientists and technologists are the ones who need to make that argument. So our statements with respect to computer technology are simply meant to add another commentary -- one that we think is needed and not available elsewhere -- to public discussion.

Our public statements have stressed the danger inherent in computer controlled, hair-trigger missile warning and launch systems. We've voiced our opposition to the development and deployment of strategic and intermediate range weapons like the MX and Pershing II in part because, due to their speed, accuracy and "counterforce" targeting, they promote increasing reliance on computer control in place of human judgement. More generally, we've talked about the uncertainties inherent in the conception, specification and implementation of any complex system, and raised the question of whether we can accept these uncertainties in the case of nuclear weapon systems. We've found numerous avenues for stating these views -- free-speech messages on radio and television, a vigil, a newspaper advertisement, interviews with the media, and talks at local conferences and workshops.

Organizing

Perhaps the single most useful lesson we've learned about the business of CPSR has to do with the importance of substantive, rather than only administrative, general meetings. CPSR/Palo Alto meets the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. The second Wednesday is devoted to a speaker; generally a short presentation of a half hour or so, followed by a fairly free-flowing discussion. The fourth Wednesday is what we've come to call a "projects" meeting, where we break up into smaller groups of people working on particular, ongoing projects or interested in beginning new ones. In each case our business is strictly limited to one half hour at the beginning of the meeting. We've found that an open steering committee meeting, held for an hour before each general meeting, is a relatively efficient and democratic means for taking care of chapter business.

Our speakers for the most part have been people in the San Francisco Bay Area who are prepared to discuss some topic of interest with us. These topics include, but are by no means limited to, technical issues. We've invited speakers who hold views that differ from ours, and found our discussion with them tremendously useful in strengthening our own understanding. In February, we requested a speaker from the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory speaker's bureau. Dr. David Nowak came and gave us his assessment of the arms race and his view of the responsibility of scientists at the weapon laboratories. At the following general meeting we heard from Dr. Hugh Dewitt, a long time staff physicist at Livermore and outspoken critic of the relationship between the weapons laboratories and the arms race.

Though attendance at our meetings waxes and wanes somewhat according to the season and other requirements on people's time, CPSR/Palo Alto feels at this point like a vital and energetic organization. We look forward to succeeding issues of the newsletter as a channel for the exchange of information between chapters, and would welcome any news from others on your own triumphs and tribulations.

Lucy Suchman and John Larson
co-directors, CPSR/Palo Alto

CPSR Denied Booth Space at NCC

"Not everyone received a warm welcome at this year's National Computer Conference. Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR), a non-profit national organization committed to reducing the threat of nuclear war, was denied booth space last Friday by the American Federation of Information Processing Societies, Inc. (AFIPS), the sponsor of the show."

So started the coverage which appeared in the NCC DAILY of May 17, the day after the National Computer Conference (NCC) opened its doors to 100,000 computer professionals at the Anaheim Convention Center in Southern California.

CPSR applied for counter space at NCC '83 by writing a letter of request to the Chairman of the NCC Committee on February 8. A letter denying that request was not received until Friday, May 13, the last working day before the conference opened. Grounds for refusal, as stated by the Executive Director of AFIPS, were that "It was felt that the stated purposes for the counter were not in keeping with the purposes of the National Computer Conference."

Anticipating AFIPS's possible objections and prior to receiving a written rejection, CPSR wrote a second, more detailed request to AFIPS dated April 29. It read, in part:

> "It would appear that the educational purposes of CPSR are supportive of AFIPS principles. Specifically, the following AFIPS objectives are most relevant:
>
> -- To promote cooperation, educational programs and information exchange in the field of information-processing among educational and scientific societies, various governmental organizations, non-profit international organizations, educational institutions, and the public at large.
>
> -- To serve the public by making available to journals, newspapers and other channels of public communication reliable information on information processing and its progress.

.. To engage in activities which promote the educational and scientific interests of the constituent . . societies and the public at large.

We would like to emphasize that CPSR serves the computer science and information-processing communities. Our purpose in participating in NCC would be to provide informational material prepared by our organization, and to invite those who are interested in our objectives to become members.".

Having been denied a counter inside the Anaheim Convention Center, CPSR decided to exercise its constitutional rights by leafletting on the sidewalks in order to disseminate its standard, one-page flier which contains CPSR's general statement, some descriptions of past projects, and a membership form.

Determined to proceed in a legal, thoughtful, and dignified manner, Rodney Hoffman, a CPSR member in Los Angeles who organized the leafletting, contacted all the appropriate authorities, both on the phone and in writing, to inform them of CPSR's proposed activities. He received free legal aid from a member of the Lawyer's Alliance for Nuclear Arms Control (LANAC) in the Los Angeles area.

Although most of the officials involved were somewhat hostile and defensive, Rodney and about 8 other CPSR members who were attending the NCC managed to distribute approximately 3000 fliers with no serious interference during the first three days of the convention.

CPSR has already sent another letter to the Chairman of the NCC Committee, with a copy to the President of AFIPS, expressing regret at the apparently unfounded negative decision and the unprofessional handling of the entire affair. This letter also indicates that CPSR will request counter space at NCC '84 to be held in Las Vegas in July of next year.

Laura Gould
National Secretary

CPSR to Have Booth at IJCAI

A welcome contrast to the hostility shown to CPSR by AFIPS is the warm letter from IJCAI, the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence. They applaud our existence and have encouraged us to apply for a booth at their meeting to be held in Karlsruhe, West Germany, from August 8-12 of this year. The expected attendance is about 2000.

At present we know of six CPSR members who are planning to attend this conference and disseminate CPSR literature from our booth. Anyone who is planning to attend and would like to help at the CPSR booth should write immediately to CPSR, P.O. Box 717, Palo Alto, CA 94301 so that we may coordinate this activity.

Laura Gould

Electronic Bulletin Board for Peace

CPSR co-sponsors a computer-based bulletin board system (BBS) dedicated to the exchange of messages on the topics of nuclear war and arms control.

Anyone with a personal computer or terminal and a 300 baud modem can access the BBS. Dial (415) 948-1474, there should be two or three rings, followed by a whistling sound (modem carrier). If you are using a modem with an acoustic coupler, put the telephone handset into the rubber cups and press the CARRIAGE RETURN (CR) key several times. The BBS should respond with a welcoming message and the line: command ?

The information on the BBS is arranged in the form of a tree containing messages on various subjects. The root node of the tree has the name CONFERENCES; attached to it are secondary nodes concerned with major topics (such as CPSR). These in turn may have other messages attached for you to read or add to.

There are four basic systems commands: READ, BROWSE, INDEX, and ADDTO. They are abbreviated as R, B, I, and A. READ (message name) will display the appropriate message. BROWSE displays the title, date, and first few lines of all of the messages. INDEX displays only the title and date of the message. The commands can take qualifying arguements, for example:

I CPSR S 22-May-83 (CR)

will display the titles of all messages at or below the CPSR node with dates on or after 22 may 1983.

ADDTO (message name) will allow you to create a new message node attached to the named message.

The command READ HELP (CR) can be used at any time to get on-line help messages.

Dave Caulkins
Palo Alto

Are You Paid Up?

This first issue of the CPSR Newsletter is being sent to our entire mailing list. However, many of the people on that list have not paid their yearly dues, and we can not afford to send subsequent issues of the Newsletter to non-members. Therefore, if you are not paid up, please fill out the membership form provided on the back, and send it back to us with your check so that you don't lose touch with us. If you are paid up, that's great - see if you can think of another good way to use the membership application form.