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The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty signed by the President in Moscow has raised many questions.

Have we made unwise concessions to the Soviet Union? Have we placed our national defense in danger? Have we frozen ourselves into a position of nuclear inferiority? Will this agreement with the Russians work when so many others have failed? What advantages are there in the treaty for us?

The answers to such questions rest in an examination of the document that was signed and the reasons both sides had for signing it. It is that kind of examination that is taking place in Congress presently.

It seems clear that both the United States and the Soviet Union had good reasons for trying to limit the arms race through a SALT agreement. In overall terms, there is some common ground in wishing to stop stockpiling nuclear weapons since each side already has enough such weaponry to destroy the other many times over. But in more specific terms there are some notable advantages for both sides to do the negotiating now.

The advantage for the Soviets is that they presently have more rocket launchers than we do, and their warheads are more powerful. Therefore, they can see some positive reasons for freezing the numbers of missiles each side can possess at a time when they are ahead. And this fact alone has caused a good deal of concern in our country.

But the United States is not without advantages in the present situation. We have a greater number of warheads and have a tremendous advantage in accuracy and in advanced technology. For instance, our MIRV system permits us to put several warheads on one missile and send each of those warheads toward a different target.

The SALT agreement in freezing numbers of weapons puts no limitation on upgrading the quality of weapons. Therefore, the future development permitted by the treaty is right down our alley. The Soviet's headlong rush toward numerical superiority is slowed, and the technological skill of the United States is given free reign. In other words, quality is substituted for quantity, and that's to our advantage.

But we will maintain that advantage only if we recognize our need to maintain a clearly superior military force. We can all hope that the future will bring further agreements that will further reduce the level of nuclear terror in the world. But those hopes must not become foolish dreams of peace through weakness. It was strength that gave us an opportunity to negotiate SALT, and only

strength will bring new treaties with new hopes.

Continued military strength means taking the SALT agreement at face value and using the advantages it gives us. We must build the new weapons systems permitted under the treaty — for instance, the B-1 bomber, the TRIDENT long range missile system, and the additional ABM site. To do otherwise could easily mislead the Soviets into thinking that we can be lulled into a false sense of security by some high-sounding words.

SALT is not an iron-clad guarantee of an era of good will among enemies. It is, at best, a first small step toward slowing the arms race. But it demands above all else that we keep our guard up to assure that the other side keeps its end of the bargain.

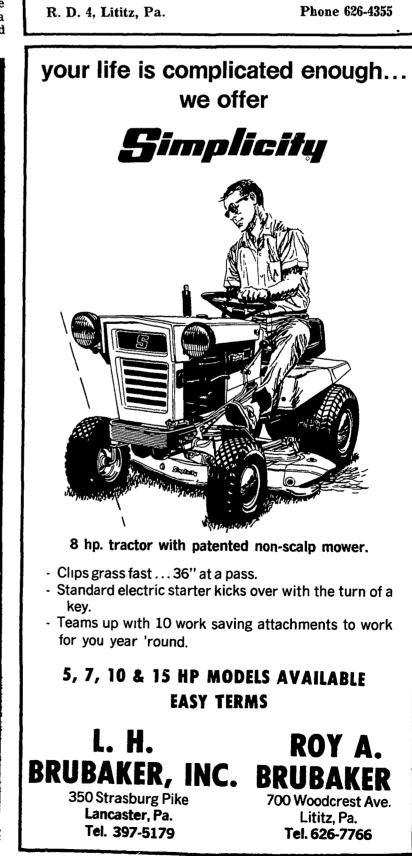
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