

Editorial Opinion

PSU GALA

Needed alumni group will provide voice for gay and lesbian graduates

A new alumni group will offer valuable input on gay concerns to University administrators.

Two former co-directors of the Lesbian and Gay Student Alliance have formed the Penn State Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association to make up for an apparent lack of representation in the University's Alumni Association.

The Penn State Alumni Association is a powerful organization that administrators consider while making decisions about the University. Now PSU GALA will also serve as an important source of influence.

Just as the Alumni Association has helped make Penn State larger and better funded, a strong PSU GALA will make the University more sensitive and diverse.

For instance, LGSA has been lobbying to add sexual orientation to the University's anti-discrimination clause. But students can do only so much without alumni support, which PSU GALA can provide.

Despite some administrative efforts, discrimination against gay men and lesbians at Penn State remains widespread. For example, many people, including some University officials, still equate sexual orientation with sex.

In 1986, *The Penn Stater*, the University's alumni magazine, refused to print a paid advertisement from LGSA asking alumni to answer a survey about sexual orientation.

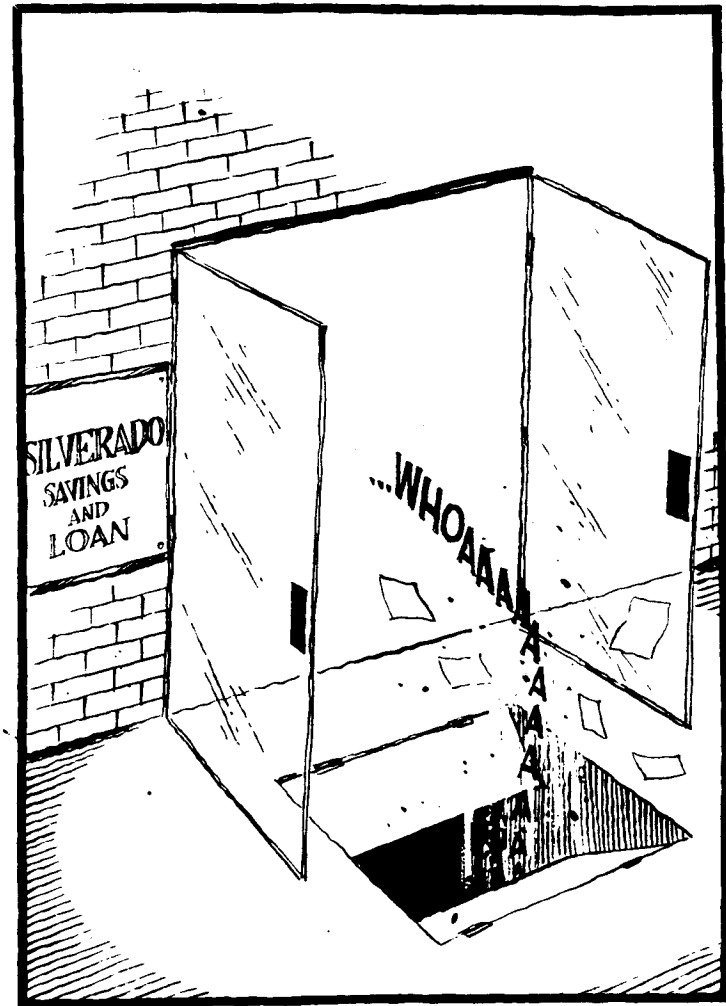
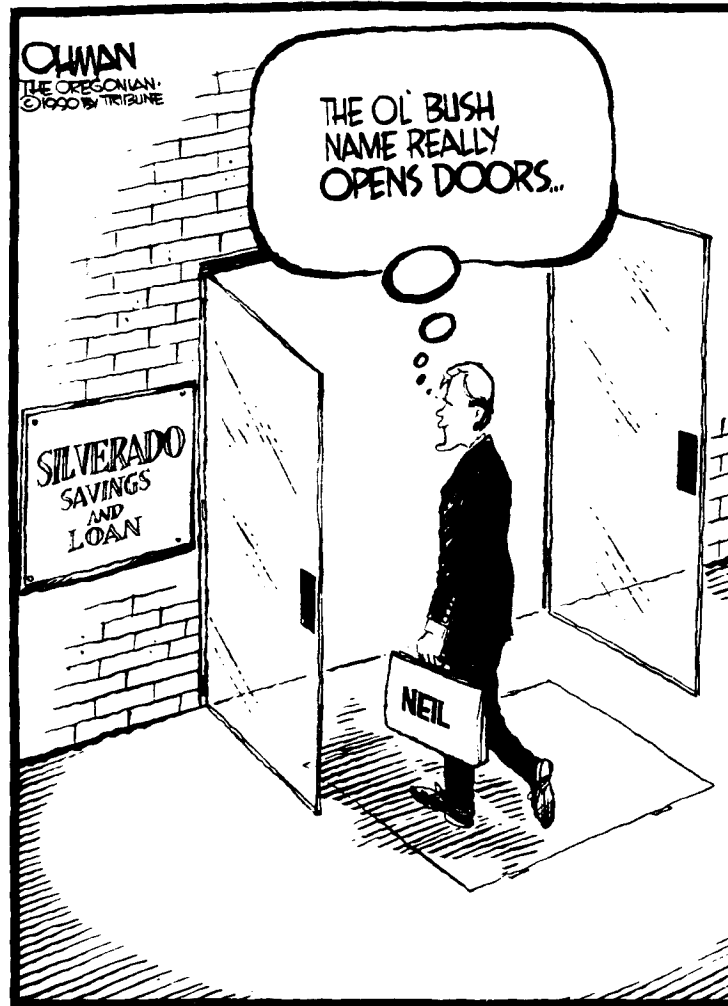
Magazine officials compared running the advertisement to running an advertisement for condoms or tampons.

Misunderstandings such as that one can hopefully be resolved by a greater recognition of gay concerns. Pressure from an organized group like PSU GALA is an effective means of making those concerns known.

Alumni have power to pressure the University in many ways. They can lobby in Harrisburg. They can lobby in Old Main. But the best tactic is to lobby with dollars; alumni dissatisfied with the University are less likely to donate money, and gay and lesbian alumni have little to be pleased with.

And like most other alumni groups, PSU GALA will sponsor reunions. These will be more than social gatherings by providing opportunities for gay and lesbian alumni to chart the progress they have made and see the areas in which more work is needed. Keeping in contact with the past is important for today's and tomorrow's leaders.

Gay men and lesbians face discrimination on a daily basis, a fact too often ignored by University officials. Now, with increased pressure from alumni, administrators are more likely to respond to the needs of Penn State's gay community.



Reader Forum

Military-industrial complex saps economy

Over the past thirty years, military spending has become the implicit industrial policy of the United States. Recently released figures ranking Penn State fourth amongst Universities nationwide in defense contracts underlines the extent to which military spending has permeated both our university and our society.

The Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) President Eisenhower warned us about in his farewell address has evolved over the years to the point that currently one job in five is somehow related to the "war machine." Though moral battles about the wrongs and rights of defense spending will rage on for years, the pressing question is "Can we, as a nation, afford to continue supporting such a policy?" The answer is no.

Despite the fact that the United States won "the war that never was," we have found ourselves ill-prepared to fight the international economic wars that are pillaging our cities. Destruction in the form of crime, illiteracy and unemployment runs rampant... directly attributable to a nation's loss of its ability to compete in increasingly fierce international markets. When placing the blame for this demise, all fingers necessarily point to Washington, D.C. and its short-sighted, number conscious, "Growth-Now!" mindset.

Implications of the acute economic inefficiency of the defense industry are widespread. Since military procurement targets innovative sectors, where labor is relatively high paid, fewer jobs are created per dollar spent than would be possible if similar amounts were targeted for social services. Furthermore, since the nature of the industry creates demand for already scarce material and labor

inputs (very few engineers and skilled machinists are unemployed), an inflationary bias is created in some sectors while doing nothing to alleviate unemployment in others.

The most problematic aspect of defense spending as a macro-economic policy, however, is its (surprisingly) slow filtration into the economy. Though input-output studies indicate military spending has a higher multiplier effect (i.e. increases in spending resulting in even larger increases in GNP) than social spending, applied economic studies almost always conclude that social spending has more growth effect than equal military expenditures. This is attributable to the immediate dispersal of social dollars into the economy whereas military dollars often take two years or more to exhibit their stimulative effects (a result of the delays in production synonymous with the industry). In English, military spending is a less than optimal stimulus of economic expansion.

Yet as we continue to grease the machine, we have failed to notice that the wheels are falling off one-by-one. In the drive for short-term prosperity, we have undermined our ability to compete in the long run. Scarce resources, especially educated labor power, are increasingly allocated to the design of complex weaponry which, on a whole, spawns relatively few products with commercial usages. The result is an economy that suffers from the sacrifice of large market efficiency in the pursuit of narrow military needs.

Had these monies been instead targeted to alternative uses such as mass transit and alternative energy technologies, there might not be all this talk of being surpassed by the

Japanese as the world's premier economic power. In fact, Japan's recent domination of the steel, auto and electronics industries — once the domain solely of the U.S. — may be attributable, at least in part, to its scarce amounts of military-related production.

Unfortunately, there is no end in sight. As Congress wrangles with budget problems, and increased taxes are on everyone's lips, the MIC marches on, while the peace dividend quietly blows away, never to be heard from again.

A final caution that must be urged is that Penn State, as a land-grant university, cannot allow itself to be swept away in a whirlwind of defense dollars. Though Richard Stern, associated director for research in the applied science lab, believes Penn State is obligated to be connected with defense research, he must remember also that the University cannot allow the quest for project money to displace the need for intellectual freedom. Eisenhower warned of the consequences: "The free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas, has experienced a revolution in research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government project becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity."

So as the Iron Curtain falls, marking the end of the Cold War, the time is now for beating the swords back into ploughshares. Such action is the only way the U.S. will retain its position as the world's leading economic power.

Martin L. Shields is a graduate student in agricultural economics.

the Collegian

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Students' letters should include semester standing, major and campus of the writer. Letters from alumni should include the major and year of graduation of the writer. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification of the letter. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Names may be withheld on request.

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What should the new president's priorities be?

If, as is likely, the Penn State Board of Trustees names Joab L. Thomas as the new University president on Monday, what do you think his major priorities should be?

Some may point to continuing efforts on campus to promote greater cultural diversity and understanding. Others might emphasize Penn State's perennial tuition increases. What do you think?

If you have views on this or any topic, *The Daily Collegian* wants to hear from you.

The letters we print reflect the views and concerns of the entire University community, so make your voice heard. It's easy.

Type a letter of one to one and a half double-spaced pages and submit it in person to the Collegian office at 123 S. Burrows St. Longer letters of up to three pages may be submitted as reader forums.

Letters may also be mailed to the office, but the author's identity will have to be confirmed before publication.

Author or authors should include name, address, telephone number, social security number, semester and major.

Generally, letters should be submitted by 1 p.m. to be considered for publication the next day. Letters submitted later will be considered for publication later in the week.

The Daily Collegian reserves the right to edit all letters for length, and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste.

Dragging the defense budget out of the cold war

Talk of a peace dividend seems... I don't know... inappropriate. The news that the country has been at war comes as a surprise to me. Did I miss the armistice? The parades with old veterans swelling with pride, children waving flags, and mothers crying? Did I miss people breaking out casks of victory wine they had been saving since the 1950s? Did I miss my chance to buy war bonds? Did my mother work in a grenade factory without my knowing it?

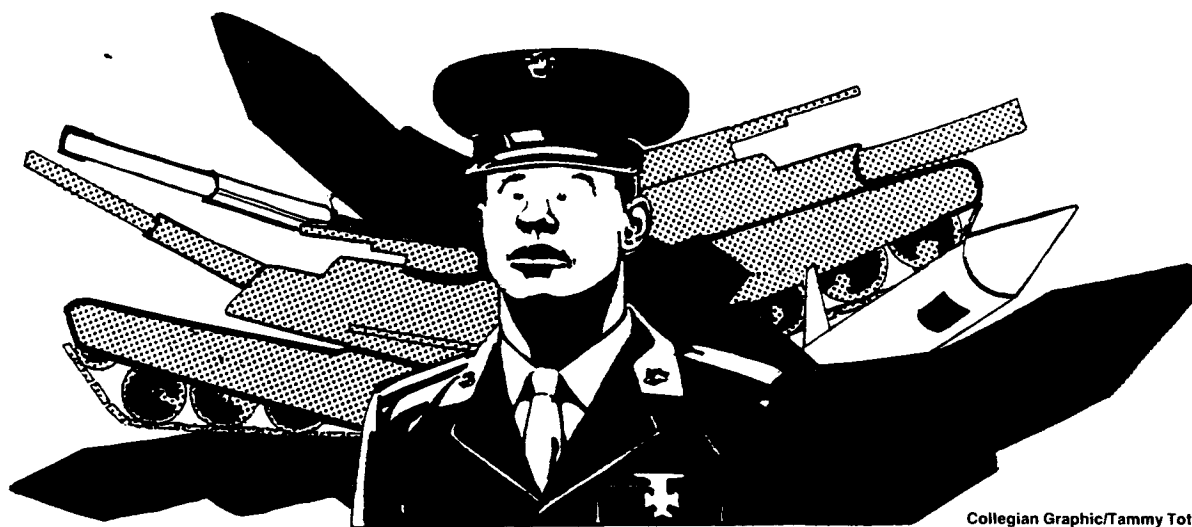
your uncles or cousins was overseas trying to kill someone or they weren't. Easy.

Now "war" and "peace" are more nebulous. The "cold war" is over, and we are being told that we won, but no one is very certain about what we won. What we know for sure is that the "war" destroyed the Soviet Union as we knew it, and may yet dissolve the Union completely. It remains to be seen whether the "war" destroyed the United States as we know it.

The muddled definitions of "war" and "peace" are among the major reasons the president, congress, and the nation are two months away from a \$100 billion budget sequester, or an austerity budget so severe that it will be equally recessionary, resulting in a decreased standard of living at home and decreased American power abroad.

The Soviet economy nearly collapsed trying to sustain the military state required to fight the "cold war;" the U.S. economy is likewise highly militarized, and suffering because of it.

Ronald Reagan knew that wars have an expansionary effect on an economy. He created the economic expansion of the 80's by deficit spending, a large part of which was the largest peacetime arms build-up in history. In many ways, the country had a war-time economy



Collegian Graphic/Tammy Toth

throughout the decade; we were simultaneously at "war" and at "peace," whatever those terms mean.

But basing an economy on military spending is bad economics: You cannot sell MX missiles to Korea or Star Wars systems to Italy. These weapons programs absorb enormous amounts of capital, research and development resources, and manpower, but, once completed, they sit in military bases and produce no economic benefit. Thus, the trillion-plus dollars spent on defense

since 1980 contributed mightily to the budget and trade deficits threatening to make the U.S. an economic basket case.

You can make VCRs and refrigerators as long as people want to buy them. But eventually the market for M1 tanks dries up. When, for political or financial reasons, the government significantly decreases military spending, the economy tends to contract. In a recent issue of the *Nation*, Alexander Cockburn observed that, in modern history, recessions

have always followed significant reductions in military spending.

There are signs that this contraction is already under way. Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas have already announced layoffs. Cockburn cites a report in the July 3 *New York Times* estimating that California's economy would lose 151,000 jobs and suffer a \$7 billion dollar drop in the gross state product if military spending drops by 11.5 percent in 1992.

A recession would be terrible given

the budget crisis, but if the hard times cause the U.S. economy to shake its dependence on military spending, the suffering could be worthwhile.

But there is no guarantee that the military will significantly shrink.

Although the forces of history, natural selection, and economics indicate that the military should wither, politics and bureaucracy could dictate otherwise. Plenty of generals, administrators, and politicians see their power base eroding and are working twenty-hour days devising a new *raison d'etre* for the military.

Some see the threat of "terrorism" as justifying a large standing army. Others would involve the military in the war on drugs. Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., proposes using the military in the campaign to save the environment (huh?). One of the benefits he claims for his proposal is that it would help to maintain the vitality of the defense establishment.

Nunn misses the point. It is the continued vitality of the defense sector that is helping to push this country towards economic crisis.

John V. Antinori, a graduate student studying English Literature, is a columnist for *The Daily Collegian*.

My Opinion

John V. Antinori



I realize that no word spoken by a politician is a valid signifier for anything — "revenue enhancements" are not taxes. But war and peace used to be pretty straightforward ideas. Either your father, or your older brother, or one of