

Editorial Comment

by Nora Hamerman

No 'deaf ear' to fusion!

Appearing as a guest on my Wednesday night New York City cable television report, "The Hamerman Report," physicist Steven Bardwell stressed that the key to the abysmal condition of U.S. military capabilities lies in the U.S. government's refusal to carry out an aggressive nuclear energy development program. Dr. Bardwell is one of the authors of *EIR*'s series documenting U.S. military unpreparedness. He stated that it is uniquely through the nuclear program that the United States would mobilize the scientists and engineers and industrial capabilities needed to sustain a viable military program.

The central irony is that nuclear fission energy and the promise of an even more efficient, clean and virtually unlimited energy source—fusion—are the indispensable bases for *peace*. It will take these energy-dense technologies to fuel the scale of economic development needed to reverse the current spiraling collapse of both the advanced and "developing" sectors which is the root cause of the current war danger.

This makes the introduction of a new fusion bill into Congress by Washington Democratic Rep. Michael McCormack one of the brightest spots on the stormy strategic horizon. The McCormack bill will authorize \$20 billion for an "Apollo" type of crash program to "construct and successfully operate" a magnetic fusion demonstration facility before the end of this century, to expand alternative approaches to fusion, and to maintain "an uninterrupted source of scientific and engineering talent from the nation's colleges and universities in support" of the fusion effort.

Underlining fusion's crucial role, McCormack states in the bill's introduction that "the early development and export of fusion energy systems, consistent with the established preeminence of the United States in the field of high-technology products, improves the economic posture of the United

States, and ultimately reduces the pressures for international strife by providing access to energy abundance for all nations. ..."

The McCormack bill deserves every Republican's and every Democrat's support. But how sadly lawful that the Carter administration, which is blustering toward a war confrontation with the Warsaw Pact, has already promised opposition to such an "Apollo" program-modeled effort. Energy Secretary Charles Duncan stated on Jan. 18, "The administration plans to turn a deaf ear on the fusion community's entreaties to speed up the fusion program."

History proves that such deafness could cost humanity more than its hearing. The link between the most advanced technologies for peaceful development and a solid defense capability was exemplified by the collaboration of Niccolò Machiavelli, the great theoretician of the militia, and the engineering genius Leonardo da Vinci in their service to the Florentine Republic of the early 1500s. The core of their "defense" strategy was Leonardo's daring hydraulic project for the rechanneling of the Arno River flowing through Florence, to utilize waterpower for a vast industrial and commercial expansion.

Had they succeeded in winning the necessary political support for that concept, Europe would have been spared the internecine warfare of the 16th century that led to the holocaust of the Thirty Years' War, and mankind could have enjoyed the benefits of the Industrial Revolution several centuries earlier.

The alternatives are starker today. The thermonuclear fusion process could revolutionize industrial processes and erase poverty from the earth. Or, in the form of hydrogen bombs, it could erase civilization as we have known it. Let us turn no 'deaf ear' to the Fusion Energy Research, Development and Demonstration Act of 1980.