

Letter to the Editor

Praiseworthy decision

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363 words

2 March 2005

The Globe and Mail

A16

In light of the Prime Minister's praiseworthy decision to say no to U.S. missile defence, one should recall W. H. Auden's admonition:

Let us honour if we can
The vertical man
Though we value none
But the horizontal one.

This country last saw such a stalwart decision when Brian Mulroney, newly elected with the promise that Canada was now "open for business" with the United States, said no to then-president Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars).

History will remember not what we declined in 2005, but what we did, through a five-year \$12.8-billion hike in the defence budget and a \$3.4-billion increase in foreign aid. Peacekeeping and international assistance fit this multicultural land even better today than in Lester Pearson's time.

The earlier Star Wars was a centrepiece of Mr. Reagan's policy, yet it slid into oblivion along with all three of its ambitious missile-defence predecessors: Nike Zeus, Sentinel and Safeguard. The present scheme may have started its decline. For the coming fiscal year, the Pentagon has proposed a \$1-billion decrease in its \$10-billion missile-defence budget.

The United States clearly has higher security priorities, as have we. They are much the same for both: to end, worldwide, the tyranny of war and want. A costly and ineffective missile defence will do little to advance these goals.