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Congressional Record - ABM (No. 7)

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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appear the better part of wisdom, in my opinion, to postpone a final decision until further research and development produces additional scientific evidence. In that fashion, scientists, both pro and con, will be in a better position to adjust their differences within the area of their specialization. And when there is a greater degree of agreement among them, perhaps there will be a greater degree of agreement among us. After all, popularity polls among the scientists are scarcely the way to arrive at a sound decision in a question as fundamental to the Nation as that of the ABM.

THE ABM SYSTEM

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I note that on May 7 our distinguished Vice President, the Presiding Officer of the Senate, said in an address before the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco that "a responsible majority in the scientific community" believes in the ABM system as recommended by President Nixon. He further predicted that the "weakness" of arguments presented by those who have questions about Safeguard "will be exposed." He stated as his personal conviction that "the system will work."

I have had the impression that the scientific community is at considerable odds as to whether Safeguard can be developed at this time into a workable system. It is interesting to learn from the Vice President, therefore, that a "responsible" majority now believes in it. Just lately, we have had reports issued by a group centered in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which states that the ABM "even if upgraded and expanded" cannot perform effectively the missions suggested for it. Is that group by any chance to be considered an "irresponsible majority." On the other hand, a study has been made by the American Security Council, headed by the chief of the Institute of Geophysics and Interplanetary Physics of the University of California, at Los Angeles, which states, "Safeguard will work in the sense it is intended to work." Is that the "responsible majority" to which the Vice President referred? Some clarification of the term "responsible majority" as used by the Vice President would be helpful to the understanding of the Senate.

In any event, these two reports seem to come from sources which are to the best of my knowledge both "responsible." They indicate to me that there is a considerable split within the scientific community. In short, there are those with impressive credentials in the scientific community who believe in the workability of Safeguard. There are those with equally impressive credentials who do not.

When informed opinion is sharply divided merely on the question of the scientific practicality of the concept, not to speak of other considerations, it would