

Editorial

Japan looks askance at superboondoggle

While the complaints of automakers have dominated headlines, following the Bush-Japanese summit fiasco, the U.S. President suffered another setback when the Japanese refused to commit funds to the U.S. project to build a superconducting supercollider (SSC).

President Bush was asking the Japanese for \$1.5 billion in order to reach the required \$8.2 billion required in order to build the SSC—money which the U.S. Congress refused to allocate. Not surprisingly, the Japanese are as reluctant as the U.S. Congress to fund a project which many believe is little better than a boondoggle for the languishing Texas economy.

Certainly the SSC, with its 54-mile oval track, could help the depressed real estate market in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, where the construction is planned. To what extent it would help basic scientific research is another question.

The SSC is an atom-smasher, which uses two rings of superconducting magnets to guide oppositely traveling proton beams into collision. The aim is to break the protons into smaller, subatomic particles, and then to study the behavior of these particles.

While additional knowledge is always desirable, we would question the fundamental assumption behind the project, which is that by knowing how to create smaller and smaller particles, we are enabled to know more about how the universe works. We would say rather, that fundamental understanding in science always arises from studying the physical geometry which underlies the apparently discrete nature of matter. Thus we would look to the study of plasma physics and the development of our understanding of fusion energy, as the road to deepening our knowledge of the physical universe.

Unfortunately, today fusion programs worldwide are not being funded up to the level of their potential. Fusion machines such as the plasma focus can tell us far more than SSC, at a far lower cost. Serious moves to colonize space would open up enormous new potentials for astronomy. Yet the fusion and the space programs have been stripped to a bare-bones existence.

Not surprisingly, Japanese scientists have resisted the idea that they would take money from basic scien-

tific research programs ongoing in their country in order to help fund the dubious U.S. superconducting supercollider. No doubt because of this, Prime Minister Kii-chi Miyazawa pulled back from any immediate commitment to fund the program, but instead agreed to set up a one-year working group between Japan and the United States to explore the possibility of his country's participation. Yukihide Hayashi, counselor of science at the Japanese Embassy in Washington, went further and admitted that Japan is reluctant to make any commitment to the SSC.

One justification given for building the SSC is the spinoffs to the economy which could follow, particularly in the area of commercialization of superconductors. The truth is that were the United States to follow the lead of Japan and move to rapidly develop a magnetically levitated train system, the U.S. economy would have an impetus for the rapid development of superconducting magnets, while at the same time improving rapid transportation and easing the burden on overcrowded air terminals.

Some pessimistically oppose the supercollider solely because it is such a big project. Here we would disagree. The world needs great projects now more than ever. We need to expand the infrastructure on Earth, but more than anything we need to build an infrastructure in space.

It's about time that the American people woke up to the fact that they are being swindled by a gang of arrogant and greedy bullies who are destroying the United States and alienating the rest of the world.

What we need is a return to the kind of sane economics which allowed America to take the lead we had during the administration of John F. Kennedy in bringing mankind to the Moon. What is needed is a man, such as Lyndon H. LaRouche, whose policies would put a manned colony on Mars within 40 years, as President. Then the United States could hope to rally the kind of international political and financial support which would allow it again to be a force for progress in the world, and a leader in the development of science and technology which would benefit all mankind.