Billions
of
1984 dollars
Number of
groups formed

NASA Appropriations by fiscal year (Source: NASA)
Space Interest Group Formation by Calendar Year (Source: Bell)

1959 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83

Figure 0.1 — NASA Appropriations and Space Interest Group Formation (Source: Adapted by the author from Trudy E. Bell, "Space Activists on Rise," Insight (National Space Institute), August/September 1980, 1, 3, 10 and Trudy E. Bell, "From Little Acorns . . . American Space Interest Groups, 1980-1982," unpublished paper. Material provided by NASA and Trudy E. Bell.)
TO THOSE

who are trying to make the pie larger
The Strategic Defense Initiative also drew strong support from the Fusion Energy Foundation and from the publication Executive Intelligence Review, both of which are associated with the Presidential candidacy of Lyndon LaRouche. These organizations, which had begun campaigning for a space-based missile defense system in May 1982 (possibly in response to the High Frontier report), emphasized the economic as well as the military benefits of the beamed-energy research that would be conducted. One of their slogans was “Beam the Bomb.”

The Citizens Advisory Council on National Space Policy met in August 1983 to draft a reaction to the President’s initiative and to reconcile differences among advocates of different technical approaches to strategic defense such as Maxwell Hunter, Daniel Graham, and Lowell Wood of Livermore Laboratories. The report, entitled Space and Assured Survival, concluded that “The President’s proposal to change the defensive posture of the United States from Mutual Assured Destruction to Assured Survival is morally correct, technologically feasible, and economically desirable.”

John Rather, speaking at a seminar at the Heritage Foundation in April 1984, said, “we’ll stake our reputations on the fact that it’s possible to do it soon.”

The Strategic Defense Initiative also stimulated more expressions of opinion from citizens space advocates in their own publications. The L-5 News carried an article by General Graham in December 1983 and a rebuttal by David Webb the following month. Jerry Pournelle added his own views a month later.

Meanwhile, technological developments based on long-standing research programs achieved increased public visibility. The United States conducted the first test of its new ASAT system in January 1984. In June of that year, the U.S. Army conducted its first successful interception of a dummy missile warhead under its Homing Overlay Experiment, reportedly capping a six-year, $300 million program. A spokesman reportedly said, “We hit a bullet with a bullet.”

By the end of 1984, strategic defense advocates still held the initiative in the ongoing debate. By most accounts, the Strategic Defense Initiative had been effective in defusing the nuclear freeze movement and was an important factor in bringing the Soviet Union back to the arms control negotiations in Geneva.