

# HUEY D. JOHNSON

## Melting guns into butter

**W**HEN FORMER CIA Director William Colby stood to speak at the Globescope conference in Los Angeles a few weeks ago, some of us who watched and waited were uncomfortable. Here was a former arch-conservative, Cold War arms advocate from the Nixon era — who had been awarded the National Security medal in 1976 for delivering billions for our arms race — addressing a gathering of environmentalists.

When Colby finished, he had so stirred the crowd that little else was talked about or remembered from that week-long conference. He had signaled a transition in history.

His message was that security is not limited to the military, that a declining environment is a serious threat to the security of the nation and the globe. He said there is lots of money available for environmental improvement — “It’s in the military, and here’s how to get it.”

Colby then outlined specific goals:

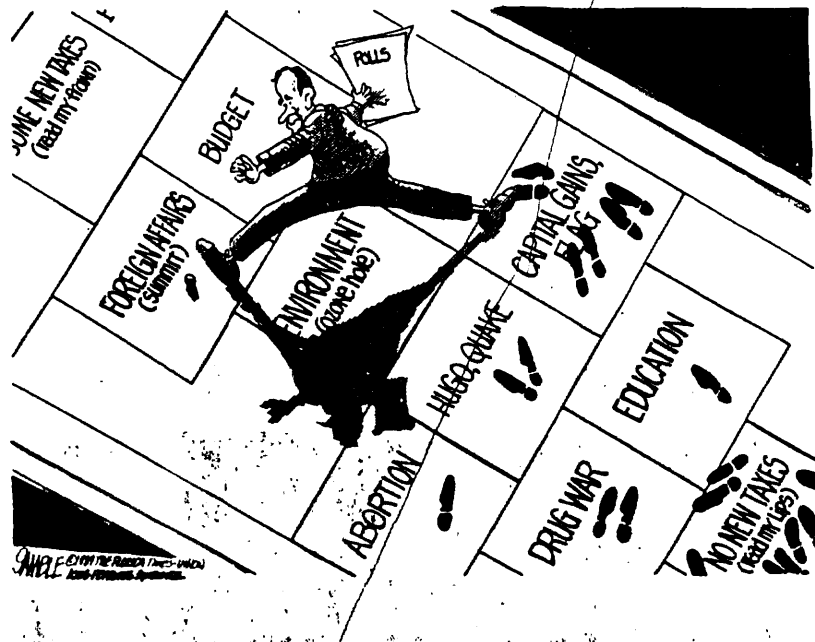
- Reducing the military budgets of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. each by 50 percent.
- Reducing strategic warheads to 1,000 each — from the current 12,000.
- Reducing NATO and Warsaw Pact forces to 500,000 each from the 2 to 3 million in place..
- Reducing arms transfers from both sides to Third World countries by 50 percent.
- Proceeding with non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, plus bans on chemical, biological and radiological weapons.

These goals are being worked toward by his Committee for National Security, a Washington, D.C.-based arms reduction group. Every hand in the room applauded.

Colby’s speech was as unexpected as Martians walking into the room. It was startling, a signal that the message had gotten through and that there were honest, caring people with access to power who had joined the effort. It was a moment of excitement equal for me to the crumbling of the Berlin Wall. Not since the day World War II ended when I was a young child have I felt such hope and optimism from an event.

Former President Carter, who

From that expressed dream to where we are, of course, is a great distance. The reality is that the military budget has been used to keep the nation’s citizenry paying hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies to high technology and defense industries. We face tremendously entrenched power and greed. Lockheed and Grumman plus the national defense research industry — all in bed with the Pentagon — are not going to welcome such statements.



was in the audience, confirmed the importance of Colby’s statement in his own speech later in the day.

“It was one of the most encouraging and exciting things I’ve heard in years,” Carter said. “Mr. Colby was always properly concerned about our national security. He has realized that a dramatic, earth-shaking change has taken place.”

A few days after the conference, Pentagon officials testifying before Congress openly described the 10 percent cut in troops proposed to reduce the deficit as the sword of Damocles. Senator Sam Nunn, D-Ga., warned that the cuts would be very damaging to our national security, and other Democratic and Republican senators joined in the wailing.

Nonetheless, the struggle to bring about change continues. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney is now reversing his position on military spending. He's making headlines, saying the military needs to prepare priorities to seriously cut its budget.

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Former top  
spook William  
Colby knows  
where to get  
the billions to  
save the  
environment  
— from the  
military.

It is wonderful to dream aloud about what the nation would do with the money and manpower if we were able to get a share of the military budget to reestablish a quality environment.

We need to start preparing over the next ten years to make the next century the Green Century, when we will see vast improvements on our disastrous global problems involving soil, water, air, forests, fish and wildlife. For this to happen, we also need to approach population policy honestly, and we need to implement an energy policy that would make the dollar strong again while solving the threats to air quality. We know exactly what to do for each of these problems; we just haven't had the money to put solutions into practice.

The possibilities are exciting. Turning swords into plowshares may happen sooner than any of us could have hoped.