The major oil-producing countries of the world are seeking ways to restrain sliding oil prices. Since November, oil prices have fallen from $31.72 a barrel to a low of $15.35 a barrel on Tuesday, Feb. 4, 1986. This decline in oil prices has been the result of overproduction by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) alone in producing over 18 million barrels a day. World oil demand is only 15.5 million barrels a day. Oil-producing countries not aligned with OPEC, such as Mexico, Great Britain and Norway, have stepped up their own production to keep up with the OPEC increase. As crude oil stockpiles rise and prices drop, the cost of refined petroleum products also drop. The wholesale price of heating oil has fallen from 80 cents a gallon in November of 1985 to under 46 cents a gallon. Leaded gasoline prices have declined from their November high of about 48 cents a gallon to this week's price of 30 cents a gallon. The wholesale price of heating oil has fallen from 80 cents a gallon to this week's price of 40 cents a gallon. Leaded gasoline prices have declined from their November high of about 48 cents a gallon to this week's price of about 30 cents a gallon. They sell for over a dollar a gallon — a 100% profit margin for being nothing more than a middleman. The customer pays for these un(classes) losses which have given rise to this spiraling downward or the upstream side of the cycle. The costs of Middle East oil producers, 11 and 54 to bring a barrel of crude oil out of the ground. Even with prices falling, that barrel is selling for about $16, a profit margin of $12 to $15. Middle Eastern oil producers, which bought in December, when prices were over a dollar a gallon, have been able to complete and the prices can be jacked up even further. The only known justification for this ad- 

opinion

Column/Daniel Pugh

Free competition should rule

The inflated production in oil prices is not an accident. The profit margin grows every day the cost of buying gasoline falls rapidly and the price of selling it remains the same or falls only slightly. An extra day of artificial price support could mean millions of dollars to an oil company.

Most upsetting of all is that many advisors and analysts have encouraged OPEC and the other oil producers to continue production. That way, stockpiles can be depleted and the prices can be jacked up even further. The only known justification for this ad-

Column/Elliott Marx

Hindsight is not possible with SDI

I was bored and restless. Romping around my house, I found an old stool with a lens in the middle of the room. I took it outside with me. But I remember a warning: "Do not leave this stool in direct sunlight." The lens wasn't melting, and I couldn't imagine anything else that could go wrong. "Why not?" I thought. The light focused on a very small area, I tilted the lens to see if I could focus it into an even smaller point. The intensity of the sunlight surprised me. The customer pays for these un-

more concerned with SDI's potential applications. People can destroy weapons with SDI, but they might also destroy innocent civilians, bridges, and cities. I was careless with my lens. But when I realized that my weapon was dangerous, I was able to take it away from my friend. Unfortunately, if we deploy SDI, we cannot use such hindsight. Once someone uses SDI offensively, it is no longer harmless.

Because of the potential for offensive applications, we scientists should take a firm political stand on this issue. We can begin by writing letters to the MIT Corporation, the state government, or Congress. If these measures are inadequate, we must have a political forum similar to the Apeaceal Colloquium to give students a chance to speak up. We can no longer do the dirty work and deny responsibility for the SDI technology we provide. If we blissfully remain silent and hope that things work out, some day we may no longer be able to speak up. An eerie silence, indeed.

"I think we've discovered some irregularities in the wind, for example, this rate Marcos got from Bengenis Air.