QUOTATIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE DEBATE ABOUT ACTIVE SETI

Assembled by Michael Michaud for a meeting of the International Academy of Astronautics SETI Study Group in September 2006

Before we make such a response or decide to radiate a long-range beacon, we feel the question of the potential risks should be debated and resolved at a national or international level.

Project Cyclops, 1972

Transmission is a diplomatic act, an activity that should be undertaken on behalf of all humans.

The SETI 2020 report, 2002

The radar and television announcement of an emerging technological society on Earth may induce a rapid response by nearby civilizations, newly motivated to reach our system directly.

Carl Sagan and William Newman, 1981

It is inevitable that any aliens who take the trouble to either signal their presence or transport themselves beyond the bounds of their own solar system will be, by definition, aggressive.

Astronomer Seth Shostak, 1998

The civilization that blurts out its existence on interstellar beacons at first opportunity might be like some early hominid descending from the trees and calling "Here, kitty" to a sabre-toothed tiger.

Astronomer Robert Rood, 1981

If there really are any radio civilizations within listening distance of us, then for heaven's sake, let's turn off our transmitters and try to escape attention, or we're doomed.

Pulitzer Prize winner Jared Diamond, 1992

Those astronomers now preparing again to beam radio signals out to hoped-for extraterrestrials are naïve, even dangerous.

Jared Diamond, 1999

Should we ever hear the space-phone ringing, for God's sake let us not answer, but rather make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible to avoid attracting attention!

Astronomer Zdenek Kopal, 1972

There is no limit to the kinds of threats one can imagine given treachery on their part and gullibility on ours. Appropriate security measures and a healthy degree of suspicion are the only weapons.

Project Cyclops, 1972

Our business as scientists is to search the universe and find out what is there. What is there may conform to our moral sense or it may not….It is just as unscientific to impute to remote intelligences wisdom and serenity as it is to impute to them irrational and murderous impulses. We must be prepared for either possibility and conduct our searches accordingly.

Physicist Freeman Dyson, 1964

We are more likely to discover first the species in which technology has got out of control, a technological cancer spreading through the galaxy. We should be suitably alarmed if we discover it and take our precautions.

Freeman Dyson, 1972

There is almost no chance that two galactic civilizations will interact at the same level. In any confrontation, one will always utterly dominate the other.

Carl Sagan, 1980

Advanced life, anywhere in the cosmos, will tend to control other life.

Astronomer Eric Chaisson, 2000

Dominance may be a natural, indeed inevitable, stance of any advanced life form.

Albert Harrison and Steven Dick, 2000

If we come into contact with some superior civilization, this would mean the end of our civilization.

Astronomer Sebastian von Hoerner, 1971

Previous experience with warlike peoples might have convinced them to arrive at a new planet well armed and ready for combat.

U.S. Congressional Research Service, 1977

I don't believe that we would find any space ship that had taken the trouble to come all this way and was not armed.

Astronomer Ronald Bracewell, 1983

Will we survive the encounter? I see no grounds for optimism.

Astronomer Robert Jastrow, 1971

An advanced extrasolar society would recognize from our manner of signaling that we have only recently emerged, scientifically speaking. If it were malevolent, such a revelation on our part might spell doom for terrestrial civilization.

Roger MacGowan and Frederick Ordway, 1966

Space provides us with…an endless supply of new places to explore, new adventures, new things we have never seen before, new sources of joy, perhaps even new sources of fear.

Astronomer Frank Drake, as quoted in 1978

By revealing our existence, we advertise Earth as a habitable planet.

Project Cyclops, 1972

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