The university of the future

As we look back on this year at MIT, we cannot help feeling that we have witnessed the beginnings of a major change in the nature of the universities within our society.

The major change which the universities (particular schools such as MIT) must face is that they are becoming ever more important and influential in all operations of our society. Our socio-economic structure is based on expertise, and there is no better source of this quantity than the academic community.

As we have seen in the issues raised this spring, as the nation draws more and more heavily on the universities’ expertise, these institutions policies on research, funding, and other areas take on enormous political implications. Once apolitical, the academic community as a whole has no longer escape the fact that some issues, not taking a stand as a community may amount to an endorsement of the status quo, which is of course a stand in itself.

Based upon reports from Agenda Days, it seems that most members of the community have reached this conclusion. Extrapolating the development of this year into the future, it seems to us altogether possible that the time may come when great universities may be forced to take stands far more “political” than such policies as Harvard’s ban on ROTC within our society.

This problem has been most clearly recognized in relation to defense research, because this area is one in which university-government relations have always been closest. We foresee the possibility that university involvement in such pressing problems as urban renewal, welfare, and other areas may well engender academics in new and possibly bitter political alliances. Thus, and the fact that the current high school situation in which portions of the community may com “pre-radicalized” in the future, leads to the conclusion that further involvement of the universities in the nation’s policy decisions is inevitable. Affluence has given students the opportunity to be concerned with principles as well as earning a living, and they are taking that opportunity seriously.

In this situation, we see a need for a new type of education which we feel that MIT is uniquely qualified to provide, if it recognizes the opportunity and rises to it. In a technical society, the mark of the educated man will not be a grounding in the arts, but rather a sophisticated understanding of the principles and limitations of science and technology. The basic education will not be the liberal arts, but “liberal technology.” Men with a technical background, but with a much broader perspective than is traditionally associated with the engineer will be the leaders of such a society. Given its strong technical base, MIT will be well qualified to offer this type of education if current efforts at achieving liberalization and “relevance” are pursued in a meaningful manner.

We see this trend in situtation as MIT as entirely consistent with our thoughts on the role of the university of the future. In our view, this approach to education (coupled with traditional professional training) will be an excellent advance in which MIT must take a leadership role.

Wednesday’s second faculty meeting on ROTC demonstrated most clearly how ill-constructed the faculty motion was, which is why we feel that the sort of academic/political decisions it will probably have to face with increasing frequency in the near future. The tedious of the meeting also demonstrated the small degree of concern about this issue among most members of the student body and faculty. Comparatively little noise was raised by the liberal radical segment of the community, probably because most felt it to be of little importance, and “a good issue to lose.”

In adopting the motion CEP proposed, the faculty again directed the efforts of the committee structure, passing instead a crazy quilt committee effort. It is interesting to note that the faculty again disregarded the efforts of its committee, probably because most members of the student body and faculty have seen reforms, great reforms and nothing permanant, but now the ROTC issue is of sufficiently slight importance (assuming that one does not take the current high school situation and protests against approval of the war) that it is not worth a major committee effort. It is interesting to note that the initiative on this matter came from within faculty ranks, rather than from the students. The latter, for the most part, seem to be expressing more substantive issues.

We still favor the initial CEP motion, but we are also inclined to believe that when compared with other problems the ROTC issue is of sufficiently slight importance (assuming that one does not take the current high school situation and protests against approval of the war) that it is not worth a major committee effort. It is interesting to note that the initiative on this matter came from within faculty ranks, rather than from the students. The latter, for the most part, seem to be expressing more substantive issues.

I do not think our country is as self-centered gloomwise as it was 40 years ago.

I do not think labor is as poor as it was 20 years ago.

I do not think American business has as fine a reas it did ante-war.

I do not think we are as poor as we were when I was a child, which is not the material for this letter.

I would like to bring up my basic criticism of the young citizen’s movement, which is that about is that is not over yet.

The Challenge of the American young citizen I find refreshing and usable by the older generation.

I do not think our government is as good as social reform as it was 40 years ago.

I think the conservatives have more influence than they did 30 years ago.

The point is that you are a sorry situation. I agree to the adjective “sorry.”

But realize that the viability of our schools has been magnified many, many times by the mass communication system. But an important point is that the fees less than they did.

As though your child of 1969 is your child of 20, and welcome your intruder into areas that now have been closed to you with a gun on the head and a concluding “Father knows best.”

I ask you to know that there is no one who is as powerful as he is, and to adopt an attitude of “Father knows best.”

We would add one point. Academic freedom has been cited frequently in arguments for the Cambridge Project. But the freedom has been cited frequently in arguments for the Cambridge Project. But the freedom has been cited frequently in arguments for the Cambridge Project.

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