In the first day of the November Action at MIT, both sides lived up to their vows of desire to avoid violence, but at the cost of backing down from previous positions.

The administration has apparently decided to avoid any face to face confrontation with the radicals. The closing of the Hermann Building and the administration offices came as something of a surprise in light of repeated warnings that “freedom of expression” and “freedom of access” would be protected. A cautious approach is also indicated by the unexpected non-presence of uniformed police. If nothing else, today has shown that MIT still has control of the Cambodge handle that. Johnson may get some criticism from the faculty and corporation (as well as students, but does that count?) for backing down, but he can counter by maintaining it.

As for the November Action Coalition: the postures of militancy have been maintained; the demonstration was filled with the appropriate radical chants, however, and represnt no escalation in the level of militancy at MIT. Not that NAC cannot claim it has in some part forced a halt in “business as usual”; clearly it has. That the administration practically rolled over and played dead, thus removing NAC’s targets, also cannot be denied. But the fact that there was no obstruction and no evictions means that the level of militancy is still that of the peace movement; the ane has not been upped, and at least some of the Members of NAC are unhappy about that. They question whether such actions as yesterday’s raise the cost of the war enough.

There is always today, of course. It seems very unlikely that the administration can close the Labs as it did the CIS since such an action would be construed by most people as total collapse. And NAC could always show up the next day. It also seems unlikely that NAC will give up the idea of an obstructive picket, since the alternative is for the Labs to continue functioning normally. So far, remember, they can claim at least moral victories.

Not obstructing the Labs would be seen as giving in on their paramount demand. Having gone this far, almost certainly facing court action, one feels that NAC’s leaders would be loath to do such a thing.

Indeed, there is good reason to believe that the leadership wanted to move into the administration offices when they forced the police out of the building and into the crowd in Building Seven. The opposition of Jon Kabat and other members and supporters of SACC, as well as numerous bystanders and bystanders who voted on the motion, may have been the deciding factor. It is after all impossible to tell NAC leaders what did it accomplish?

But what did it accomplish?

In the day of action but what did it accomplish?

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