Analysis

Judicial system needed

By Alex Makowski

One month ago, students and non-students seized the offices of President Johnson and MIT Corporation Chairman Killian. The motivating issue was not war-related research or mistreatment of the workers, it was a dispute with MIT’s judicial procedures.

Now 29 students and non-students are awaiting trial on a charge of trespassing. But this court action can only be judged a delaying tactic; whatever the outcome, MIT will be forced to resolve this case by its own judicial process. And unless needed reforms are initiated, the same problems will recur.

Perhaps the extent of these problems could be best understood by reviewing events over the past two months. Early in December, the Rogers panel, one of the two committees Johnson set up to review the November Actions, released its findings. While advising against judicial action for all but a select few incidents during November, it recommended special consideration of the GE demonstration October 28. The unusually high level of violence, to use the panel’s phrasing, necessitated this review.

Dan Nyhart, Dean for Student Affairs, hoped to make the charges against four students identified as participants at close to the Rogers panel as possible. That was by writing a participation in a demonstration when according to the panel was deemed appropriate, rather than a forthright accusation of committing violence.

But was any action necessary at all? Nyhart and other have insisted that the pushing and shoving outside the placement offices last October was no more violent than the weekly action in the LSC office line. Certainly Albert, who was buried in the middle of the crowd, away from the emotional flares between the students’ vanguard and the faculty guarding the door, was guilty of no more than pushing. The administration claims its action was not motivated by political considerations. Why, then, was this charge brought against Albert, while dozens of regular LSC viewers get off scot-free?

Now consider the role played by the Faculty Discipline Committee. Remember that it acted in a period of high emotional tensions. As Chairman Roy Lamson undoubtably well-meaning attempt to open up the meeting backed, he was forced by the wording of the charge to find the students guilty (they were, after all, "participants") and confronted by contempt of their own authority, the committee’s over-reacted. That the contempt ruling was justified was questionable; in any event, the committee erred in judging the case itself, and judging it so soon after the incident.

Almost unbelievably, the administration once again took action that left itself open to a charge of political repression. Granted, both faculty and alumni sentiment were overwhelmingly in favor of an immediate resolution of the problem, but the action that was taken was arbitrary, to say the least. Why, for instance, was Pete Kramer taken to court? Rather than being an active participant in the takeover, he went in to encourage students to leave. His role was similar to that of any member of the student advisory group, but Kramer faces thirty days in jail.

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Albert’s probably captured the essence of the problem when he spoke before the General Assembly in January. Rather than making personal attacks against Lamson and the other committee members, he insisted that they role they must play corrupts and distorts their basic human feelings. "Lamson doesn’t wake up each morning, Albert continued, "trying to think of some new way to get me." He has to have some justification for repression on the administration.

Yet here the radicals attempt at some sort of appeal through the "system" ended. While student government leaders were meeting to formulate a course of action that would lead to a faculty vote overturning the expulsion, RLSDS and MITSOS

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