The Special Labs

The Tech applauds the action taken by President Johnson regarding the Special Laboratories. Faced with the current lack of funds for socially oriented research and the inability and unwillingness of the Draper Laboratory to change, we regard the President's decision as the wisest course of action he could have taken. We regret the loss of the Lab in its role as part of the educational process offered at MIT but hope that perhaps a large number of students will be able to remain associated with the Lab even though it is no longer a formal part of the Institute.

With regard to the Lincoln Laboratory we heartily support efforts to decisively the work done and to increase educational ties with MIT. We hope these efforts will be increased and that the administration will quickly eliminate any inconsistencies between current projects at the Lab and the recommendations of the Poons Panel.

The decision of the Labs was made with regard to the future of MIT and the long range goals and attitudes of the Institute. This decision becomes a landmark in MIT's history and represents a conscious step away from the classified project-oriented Department of Defense research which has come to characterize the Draper Labs over the past several years. It is the many aspects of expression that MIT as an institution could make stating that this type of research is inappropriate for a university.

At the same time, we hope that this is the beginning of an era in which MIT will prove to be the leader in technically oriented research in the fields of social and urban systems. When funds become available for this research we look forward to the Urban Systems Labs becoming analogous to what the Draper Laboratories has become in the field of inertial guidance.

With the divestment of the Draper Lab and the gradual "conversion" of Lincoln Lab away from classified DOD research, MIT will find itself out of the weapons system development game. MIT has reordered its priorities, but it is now needed a reordering of the country's priorities so that in the future there won't be a new MIRV contract to worry about—not at MIT—not at the Draper Lab—anywhere.

The Corporation and GM

It is difficult to express in words the bitterness we feel over the MIT Corporation Executive Committee's decision to reject the Corporation Joint Advisory Committee's recommendation to vote in lieu of the proposals submitted by Campaign GM to the General Motors stockholders.

The student organizers who attempted to get MIT to support these modest reforms—reforms of a segment of our economy which every agreement has been shortsighted if not downright careless concerning its social responsibility—did everything according to the Corporation rules.

There were no occupations of buildings, violence, or coercion. There weren't even any demonstrations.

The General Assembly did not pass any "emergency"; it merely set up a task force to study the matter.

The task force report was submitted to CJAC, the board of directors of the Corporation itself set up to handle such matters. CJAC includes six Corporation members representing something under a hundred members of the Corporation; six faculty members, representing several hundred faculty, and six students, representing about 7000 students.

CJAC conducted lengthy hearings and discussions. The report represented a breadth of view was heard. Its recommendations were watered down to support only one of the Campaign GM proposals in order to attain virtual unanimity within CJAC and hopefully the Executive Committee.

And after all this careful observance of due process, which the Corporation respects, the Executive Committee—a small group of men who come from the main body of the world—met and arbitrarily rejected a clear community consensus on this issue.

The Executive Committee of the MIT Corporation suffers from the same narrowness of vision that CJAC felt plagued General Motors. The action of the Corporation did not represent the vast majority opinion of the community. In the future, the Executive Committee must listen more closely to its own advisory committee—or perhaps it won't have one.

D-Labs Inc.: divestment as a cop out

By Bruce Schwartz

This is a dissenting editorial. I have always believed that one does not apply the act of bowing to the inevitable. Thus I cannot go along with those who feel President Johnson's decision to divest the Labs was the correct one. I believe that the MIT Corporation Executive Committee that the President Johnson's decision to divest is an admission of failure of conversion attempts as President Johnson regrets the failure of conversion attempts as demonstrated. It merely set up a task force to study the matter.

The battle against wasteful research is thus dead. The Institute has been trying to get funds for alternative projects ever since Agenda Days last spring, and has been unable to find enough work to keep the Labs going.

I shouldn't say it, but I told so. Last spring I wrote in this paper that there would be no way to change L-1 Lab priorities, and it is precisely this that the Labs will now take on even more weapons work, if the government funds it. Of course, as we suggested "way back in the January Reamer," (truth is stranger than fiction!) the Labs could quite easily have divested themselves from the war. They are, after all, not much more than the sum of the talents of the Lab searchers. Restiveness within the labs probably figured strongly in President Johnson's decision to divest and to have them go. (Deployment is slated to begin soon.) The basic problem, the arms race, will remain.

Indeed, may it be divestment, the conscious policy, will ultimately prove the cowardly one. What little control the MIT community had previously exercised on the Labs will disappear, and it is possible that the Labs will now take on even more weapons work if the government funds it. Of course, as we suggested "way back in the January Reamer," (truth is stranger than fiction!) the Labs could quite easily have divested themselves from the war. They are, after all, not much more than the sum of the talents of the Lab searchers. Restiveness within the Labs probably figured strongly in President Johnson's decision to divest and to have them go. (Deployment is slated to begin soon.)

The President as much as admitted he had no other choice. Conversion has failed; divestment is no solution. It cures the symptom but not the disease.

The battle against wasteful research was an escalating arms race running, as before, with the Federal Government. If MIRV and ABM aren't funded, they won't get done. Opponents of these and similar projects must fight for cuts in the Defense budget. Failing such cuts, the only recourse would be to more radical actions to prevent weapons development. Let us hope they doesn't have to come to that. And let no one applaud.