Maybe Krasner has paid enough

The news that Stephen Krasner will be returned to jail comes when this campus is quieter than at any time within the last four years. Tempers have cooled, and if underlying grievances still exist no one is battering down any doors seeking redress. Two years ago Howard Johnson had his cars stoned and the doors of the executive suite reinforced against attack; now, in a more specific climate, Jerry Wiesner has ripped them out and replaced them with glass.

The events of January 1970 seem terribly remote. But a few nagging reminders linger, and for some of us they are, or should be, painful.

Steve Kramer is getting a raw deal.

Convicted on a charge of dubious applicability (making a burglarious instrument), he faces the harshest punishment meted out to any person involved in the demonstrations which rocked MIT two years ago. Two other students, George Kansilficas '70 and Pete Bohms '75, served six weeks in Billerica for disrupting classes during the occupation, but their convictions were for misdemeanors and not do not give them the permanent stigma attached to a felony conviction such as Krasner's. Seven out of the hundreds of students who entered and occupied the Presidential suite were expelled from MIT; two so far have been readmitted and just last week, Mike Alpert, whose expulsion sparked the whole affair, was quietly reinstated.

In a sense, that leaves Kramer the scapegoat for all the radical actions that took place at MIT. He had the bad luck to be a radical and to commit one of the few offenses a secret Grand Jury in January 1970 thought was indictable and provable. He did not build the ram alone; he was the only person the campus patrol recognized. None of the organizers of any demonstration here have ever been indicted for inciting a riot; some of the persons who vandalized the occupied offices even came to trial; only Krasner was prosecuted (or is it persecuted?).

All this is not to exonerate Kramer of guilt. He built the ram; his attorney has repeatedly called this a "political crime." Nor does the fact that other people who committed like "crimes" were never prosecuted in any way affect the merits of Kramer's case. But it does suggest that justice has not been done on an equal basis.

It is valuable, at this point, to try to justify his actions because they were "political" rather than merely "criminal." That, along with the suggestion that his prosecution is part of systematic repression, would only lead to unredeemable debate.

Archibald MacLeish, Pulitzer Prize winning poet and dramatist, and long-time friend of MIT President Jerome Wiesner, has written a special poem commemorating Kramer's trial. MacLeish and Wiesner met when Wiesner was asked by MacLeish, who was then Director of the Library of Congress, to set up the library's Recording and Acoustical Laboratory.

Kranmer's behavior after January 1970, before and following his graduation, certainly indicates no need for rehabilitation. And what American prison rehabilitates, anyway? Returning Stephen Kramer to jail would be a tragic waste of limited prison space and considerable resources. It is pointless and should not be allowed to happen. -BSM

Events in brief

About 400 people attended the New England Antifair Workshop Conference sponsored by Greater Boston Peace Action Coalition at BU's Hayden Hall Sunday, Ernest DeMao, United Electrical Workers vice-president, gave the keynote address, calling for labor-student movement unity. Workshops for Vespi, Gaye Women, Labor, Students and Community Groups were held. Each delivered a short report at the end of the day. Significant motions were made by the Veisi, that the November 6 march be led by a GI contingent and women, for a United Women's Contingent feeder march.

Wiesner tells this story to show how much the cold war has changed since he was on the Federal team. As JFK's Science Advisor, Wiesner sat on the National Security Council. At an NSC meeting in 1962, discussing the topic of nuclear disarmament, he suggested that the Red Chinese be invited to join the upcoming 18-nation Conference. "The entire table went dead silent," Dr. Wiesner recounts. Secretary of State Dean Rusk was so upset that he went to Kennedy and reported that Wiesner had tried to turn the meeting into a farce.

Now it's nine years later, and Richard Nixon, the old cold warrior, is going to Peking.

-compiled by Bruce Marten

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