Editorial

Selling MIT: bombs for the Shah

For the second time in as many weeks, the MIT administration has allowed concern over its budgetary situation to override broader considerations of education and morality by making important decisions on the future of the Institute.

MIT has decided, apparently due to its need to increase academic income, to admit 20 to 27 Iranian students for a special graduate program in nuclear engineering.

The Iranians will be trained to operate reactors which the United States is trying to get away from it. Not withstanding the fact that the Shah of Iran, an absolute dictator, trying out his expensive new nuclear program, is engaged in a massive program of military armament and national development, including sending hundreds of students all over the world to learn, among other things, nuclear engineering.

MIT evidently intends to carve itself a piece of the Iranian action, to enjoy the largesse. This is an immoral position which cannot be justified.

India is in a position critical to the peace of the world today. Overlooking the powder-keg in the Mideast from near the borders of the Soviet Union, Iran, with its recent military buildup, cannot be ignored by anyone concerned with the fate of that troubled region. Perhaps India and Iran - traditional and long-time enemies of the Iranians, both reportedly are concerned about the prospects of the Shah of Iran, an absolute dictator, trying out his expensive new military program.

For MIT to help introduce nuclear technology into this situation is criminal. Arms control experts have highlighted Iran as a country to be feared, reflecting the feeling that spread of nuclear arms into that region could have grave consequences for the peace of the world. MIT, of course, is not training engineers to build bombs, but the leap from reactors to weaponry is not great. The Institute has no concern over its budgetary situation to override broader issues.

Cost-benefit analysis, in this case, has won out over MIT's standing as an "Open University," an educational institution, and an institution with a social responsibility to use technology wisely and safely.

The administration and its supporters will argue that Iran is buying reactors all over the world, not just from the United States, and that the controls that are placed on American reactors are stricter than those that are placed by that, for example, the French. In this case, they will say, is it not the lesser of two evils to have MIT involved in this.

The administration consists of a numbers department and administration, a thorough consideration of the moral questions and long-term implications of such a move might have been expected to win out over the increased income which will be generated for the Institute by the decision. Yet discussion of the issue — nuclear proliferation, MIT's obligation to society, MIT's obligation to its own educational standards in developing special programs — has not occurred within the community, as evidenced by the decision to admit 20 to 27 Iranian students all over the world to learn, among other things, nuclear engineering.

The administration states that MIT has been approached by the Shah of Iran, and that MIT's decision was based on the premise that the best way to stop the flow of Iranian students to the United States would be to have them trained to operate reactors in their own country. MIT's position was based on the premise that the best way to stop the flow of Iranian students to the United States would be to have them trained to operate reactors in their own country.

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Watergate spirit lives on

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Twenty five months ago, this reporter shivered in the cold along with 5000 of the other hardy souls watching the inaugural speech of Spiro T. Agnew and Richard M. Nixon. It was perfectly clear, even as Nixon attended the press galleried by John Kennedy's Inaugural Address, that we were listening to an unconvincing criminal. Here was a mastermind who had managed to build a national election and showed every evidence of getting away with it. Yet standing in thedisturbing events the week before in the courthouses of the country — nuclear proliferation, MIT's obligation to society, MIT's obligation to its own educational standards in developing special programs — has not occurred within the community, as evidenced by the decision to admit 20 to 27 Iranian students all over the world to learn, among other things, nuclear engineering.

Given the reputation of the MIT faculty and administration, a thorough consideration of the moral questions and long-term implications of such a move might have been expected to win out over the increased income which will be generated for the Institute by the decision. Yet discussion of the issue — nuclear proliferation, MIT's obligation to society, MIT's obligation to its own educational standards in developing special programs — has not occurred within the community, as evidenced by the decision to admit 20 to 27 Iranian students all over the world to learn, among other things, nuclear engineering.

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