Opinion

Experts administer, the rest just request

By Mike McNiece

The cult of the expert is strong in MIT, but nowhere is it stronger or more pervasive than at MIT. The structure, nature, and purpose of the Institute make it so. No institution thrives on the training professionals in specialized fields could exist without members of its community garnering a strong admiration for the culture of expertise that pervades this area of professional and technical activity. Much criticism of the administration's determination to be guided by the opinions of the experts is therefore born of the realization that the experts are not always the most appropriate people to turn to for guidance on matters of the utmost importance.

The student who was returning from a meeting with the administration, stated as Tribus, but it was as though he was dodging questions about the role of MIT in the Iranian program. After all, he had pointed out, the experts had said that the Iran project was not influenced by MIT. So how could they be influenced by MIT? Tribus echoed these questions that the students' discussion of the program. Students had even begun to suspect that these experts might not affect MIT as non-engineering faculty and administrators are afraid that a "campaign" conducted outside of the hallowed chambers of the Institute would "influence" people on the issue. God forbid that real people were allowed to influence a decision.

The attitude of administrators at the meeting Thursday towards the students they were addressing was not as benign as stated at Tribus, but it was as condescending and patronizing, or as Bowers and Pounds had been, several times to address the issue in the past. When questions were asked, and tried to imply students didn't know what they were talking about. If a student asked him about administrative action taken on foreign affairs, he'd ask the student what he meant by the term, and then ask if the student wanted MIT to deny admission to foreign students. Asked if MIT should play a role in changing the role of nuclear proliferation, a student asked, "It should denounce its practice on the ground that many students are expressing a different impression to them were - not exactly a desirable impression to leave. The Chancellor, Paul Gray doesn't dodge questions as much as he dodges questions about the people they or ignore them. MIT admits foreign students who are supported by governmental contracts. Therefore MIT can contract with governments to admit students. The Iranian program is a special arrangement, but not a special arrangement in any terms that mean it needs special consideration. Tribus tried to negotiate with Iran - just it didn't talk to many people about them.

What happens to a person when he becomes an administrator? Paul Gray was at one time considered the best teacher at MIT, a man who respected students and was respected in return. Now as Provost, and he's spending his time during the occupation of the president's office spying on students so he can testify against as many as possible where they are on trial. Make him Chan-

The students echoed the students who were talking about MIT as going from anyone but his "peers," talking about controlling who is everybody else is talking about the sensitivity of the students, and the possibility of nuclear war. Gray's not alone in making the "administrator" shift, he is just one example of what might happen. They displayed Wednesday to the cult of the expert, the idea that the administration that students and faculty and ought to be left alone to do so without anyone else in the community interfering. Many members of the administration are always supposed to know what is to be done beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. Therefore, in order to think about the concerns - including genuine and legitimate concerns - of everyone else in their administration. There are really two kinds of MIT governance: the soft issues that don't cost money or require the efforts of any individuals, and the meaningful decisions that will affect the Institute are going and what it's doing. The faculty and students can quibble all they like over the first, just as long as they don't disturb the experts at all. It's a fair deal - the experts told us.

Not malicious

To the Editor:

I understand that your article "The ultimate in environmental art" is meant to be an indirect paraphrase of the Food Show. I would like to inform you that your suggestion is not quite as original as you may think. The "Le Pain" (official English title "Pull-up") was presented by the internationally known French artist Arman Fernandez, at the Paris Internet gallery, 1 Rue des Beaux Arts, in 1961. (For details consult Koth Library.)

This sociological information contained in garbage has been investigated by a group of scientists and students at the University of Arizona in Tucson recently. Further comments on that project are part of the written information in the Food Show. Contact Suzanne Bower, L. Simon, or Dennis Glover, Special Student in course 1046, messages via CAVS.

I would like to prey your subscription to The Tech, W20-423.

Not original

To the Editor:

I understand that your article "The ultimate in environmental art" is meant to be an indirect paraphrase of the Food Show. I would like to inform you that your suggestion is not quite as original as you may think. The "Le Pain" (official English title "Pull-up") was presented by the internationally known French artist Arman Fernandez, at the Paris Internet gallery, 1 Rue des Beaux Arts, in 1961. (For details consult Koth Library.)

This sociological information contained in garbage has been investigated by a group of scientists and students at the University of Arizona in Tucson recently. Further comments on that project are part of the written information in the Food Show. Contact Suzanne Bower, L. Simon, or Dennis Glover, Special Student in course 1046, messages via CAVS.

I would like to prey your subscription to The Tech, W20-423.

Letters to the Tech

Communication lack not surprising

To the Editor:

The obvious lack of communica-

The obvious lack of communication between the President and the Standing Committee on Special Laboratories is symptomatic of the very problem the Committee was created to solve. In its recommendation for the creation of a Standing Committee, the 1969 Review Panel on Special Laboratories ("Pounds Panel") proposed the Committee "as a mechanism for advising the President with the considered advice of students, faculty, and laboratory staff," and to "meet regularly to review the operation of the laboratories, review particular projects and recommend steps for advancing the evolution process recommended in this Panel's report." (emphasis added)

It was felt that a continuing review of the Special Labs program was necessary to insure both appropriateness for MIT and to maximize the beneficial exchange between the Labs and the academic program. The Committee was not merely asked to consider Defense projects at Dosser, but to monitor the general question of how can any Special Lab (e.g. the Energy Resources Lab) become involved in broader goals. By establishing a Standing Committee, it was also felt that controversial projects, whether in weapons development or in weapons development, would come to the attention of the community in a fair manner.

Gray's not alone in making the "administrator" shift, he is just one example of what might happen. They displayed Wednesday to the cult of the expert, the idea that the administration that students and faculty and ought to be left alone to do so without anyone else in the community interfering. Many members of the administration are always supposed to know what is to be done beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. Therefore, in order to think about the concerns - including genuine and legitimate concerns - of everyone else in their administration. There are really two kinds of MIT governance: the soft issues that don't cost money or require the efforts of any individuals, and the meaningful decisions that will affect the Institute are going and what it's doing. The faculty and students can quibble all they like over the first, just as long as they don't disturb the experts at all. It's a fair deal - the experts told us.

Jim Hobing
April 15, 1975.