Industry "pull" used to cancel E-Lab's methanol research?

By Mike McNamee

Gasoline and alcohol have mixed at the MIT Energy Laboratories to ignite a hot debate over whether the Lab has yielded to pressure from the oil and automobile industries to abandon promising research into alternative auto fuels.

A "News and Comment" article in the latest issue of Nature Magazine has provoked controversy that has grown up over Lab Director David White's cancellation of a research project involving use of methanol (methyl alcohol) and gasoline auto fuels, and hints that pressure from Exxon and Ford Motor Company caused the lab.

Lincoln Lab scientist Thomas Reed, who was quoted in the article as saying that $30,000 of a $100,000 Energy Lab grant he received for his research on gasoline-alcohol mixtures was removed from his account just before White cancelled an extractive fuel test of Reed's fuel mixtures in students' and faculty's cars.

And Reed says he believes "industrial opposition" from Ford and Exxon, each of which gave the Lab a $500,000 unrestricted grant about eight months ago to "to the fleet test and to the credibility it would have given methanol fuels played, in my opinion, a major role in the program's cancellation."

Neither Reed nor White calls the Science article "very evenhanded and accurate," nor White will discuss the controversy. Reed says that White has released a letter which he is sending to the editor of Nature, however, in which he "rejects as utterly false a charge that (methanol) research has been ended and that such termination came at the behest of the oil and automobile industry."

Although the article only reports on Reed's "pull" being cancelled, White explains that the Departments of Chemical and Mechanical Engineering, as well as the Labs, have "active research projects involving methanol."

And he says that Reed was cancelled for a number of practical and technical reasons, charging that Reed's fleet test methodology was inadequate and his experience in the field was "insufficient opposition" to White's objections.

But even more interesting was Reed's own recollection of the controversy. Reed told Science that "rather than risk a repeat of the whole affair," he returned a check for his Energy Lab limited grant - an action of which White said he was "shocked" to learn. No investigation of the Science charges has been planned by MIT.

Gains of 60s aren't enough, Bond says

By Gerald Radke

Despite the gains of the sixties, the relative position of the blacks and poor in American society has not improved, Georgia State Senator Julian Bond told an audience at Harvard University Sunday night.

In a talk on the issues of the 1976 presidential campaign, Bond, a black, cited a wide range of problems in contemporary American society, ranging from "warehousing of children than education" to slavery of the "working but can't live on what they make," and others.

Among the reforms needed, Bond stated, are taxes to "reduce the disparity between the needy and the greedy," for a program of full employment, for "vocational and academic education," for national health care "paid for by the treasury, not the building maintenance," to make a profit.

While opponents point out that nuclear power plants in 2015. And it appears now that Reed's fleet test be cancelled.

And the Lab has lost at least $50,000 as a result of the controversy. Reed told Science that "rather than risk a repeat of the whole affair," he returned a check for his Energy Lab $100,000 grant which Reed was given for his Fleet Test project — Reed's research on the use of alcohol as an auto fuel.

The Admissions Office would like students who are going home for the holidays to fill out applications and pay their dorm fees and financial aid can be obtained from the Office. Come to Room 3-108, today or tomorrow from 9 to 5 if you have any questions.

Federal actions hurt an already-grim scene

Research cut coming?

By Mike McNamee

The federal government is considering changes in accounting procedures for college and university research contracts that might cost the institutions one-third to one-half of the money they receive for overhead support.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is circulating proposed revisions in the 30-year-old system of research funding that allows colleges and universities to charge part of their overhead — lab costs, building maintenance, student stipends, and administration — to the federal contracts.

In research-oriented institutions like MIT, which draws half of its $404-million budget from direct and indirect research funds, would lose up to half of the money they are now reaping for research overhead — a loss with severe consequences for those institutions' strained budgets.

Although no complete accounting has been done at the Institute yet, Vice President for Research Thomas Jones told The Tech that MIT would stand to lose at least $8 million of the $54 million overhead it receives from the federal government.

And since the cuts would have their heaviest effect on libraries and financial aid — two indispensable items in the effect would be doubled if MIT attempted to take up the slack.

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