Sanctuary, Agenda Days sparked 1969 unrest

By Gordon H AFF

This is the first part of a series looking back at the period of student unrest on campuses across the nation during the late sixties and early seventies.

In the early 1960's, the ominous rumblings of protest against the Vietnam War and the draft began to shift out from college campuses. The objections were at first quiet and localized. Most action was caused by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and similar campus groups.

"Time of Troubles"

In 1968, the situation began to change. The average student was swept into the spirit of the times. Looking back through pages of The Tech, that year, one sees frequent editorials about the draft and the war. In the winter issue, Bill Seidel, one of the SADC members, wrote a powerful essay in the words of Bill Seidel, one of the Sanction's members. The result of the eight days of sanctions, marked the long-awaited event discussed. The sanctuary was successful. O'Connor was arrested quietly. "As far as I'm concerned," Mike Albert was officially declared "UAP. He had the most votes. I think that because he is not registered as an undergraduate, he should not be UAP. But I consider him a student because he goes to classes and intends to register." As UAP, Maria had the right to interpret the constitution and a two-thirds vote of inscomm was necessary to overrule her. Mike Albert officially declared "Student Association President, a development which would have very important ramifications in the year ahead. He moved on to become one of the most vocal and violent protesters against MIT's administration and the Instrumentation Laboratories (I-Labs) war research. He would later be expelled for his actions.

In May, SACC members headed for the November seige. At 5:15 the following morning, the police broke down the University doors and arrested on charges of criminal trespass 210 students who had occupied the building. Although there were some 75 injuries, in comparison with the action at Columbia. Over 1000 policemen surrounded the building and arrested along with the other demonstrators. The protestors were met on the steps of 77 Mass. Ave. by Professors Charles Draper and Rene Miller. For over an hour, Draper and Miller tried to appease the angry crowd of over 100 people which gathered on the steps, but most of the protestors remained unconvincing.

At this point, it had become very clear that something had to be done to promote peaceful discussion between students and faculty. From this atmosphere sprang the Agenda Days. For two days, all afternoon classes were cancelled so that students and faculty could participate in various seminars designed to promote better understanding between the two groups. These two nights, faculty visited students in their living groups for dinner, in order to get to know them better. Debates raged between SACC and students enrolled in the ROTC programs.

Little happened for the rest of the academic year. Mike O'Connor came back to speak. Several minor protests broke out, but nothing major happened. Unlike many other schools, MIT had gone through the year with no major physical confrontations or violence, but this good fortune could not hold out for long.

Mike Albert was elected UAP during the early days of student unrest at MIT. Albert was eventually exiled from the Institute for his actions, and was seen at a later date.

A leader of the Sanctuary talks to students during the eight-day November seige.

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