MIT resurfaces student activists

By Bob Wasserman

The summer columnist by the editor-in-chief traditionally is dedicated to the graduation ceremony marking next fall, and I thought I’d bring up the old spathy-activist debate once again.

On the spathy side, critics of today’s generation emphasize the placid, consensus-minded nature of the situation: Williams of the Political Union, last year’s summer columnist, for example, wrote “From being idealists, today’s college students are almost self-effacing ‘opportunists.’” Even Downer’s Zinker Harris speaks of “the new nonresistance” on university campuses. This is far from true, however, as college activism has risen sharply over the past year, and was never totally dormant last year. Last month over 15,000 people attended a demonstration at the Seahawk Nuclear Plant in Washington. Sponsored by the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance, the rally brought a new generation of young activists into the political fray.

Closer to campus, last spring featured a march and rally against MIT investments in American Corporations involved in South Africa, organized by the MIT-Wellesley Coalition against Apartheid. On the political front, the battle for 1976-77 Undergraduate Association President centered around an experienced, active campus community chairman and a fresh-faced electee who challenged the conventional view of academic and economic policy. In comparison, last year’s president was an old hand, a candidate whose victory actually came from the popularity of his disco-dancing clinch.

As incoming freshmen, most of you have received a great deal of mail this summer welcoming you to MIT, and congratulating you on winning the big leagues of academia. This correspondence has probably urged you to register for just one or two courses, or try out one activity, or think about a certain academic program. This material is important, of course, and is certainly relevant to most of your present concerns about the college experience. But may I also urge you to find out about these issues and more.

For example, a series of demonstrations were held at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and the anti-Vietnam War movement first trained momentums. Soon after the cultural aspect of R/O Week took place, many students were exposed to the anti-nuclear movement. Sponsored by the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance. MIT resurges this fall, the battle for MIT, the rally brought a new generation of young activists into the political system.

By David B. Korten

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