Who'll be President after Jerry's gone?

By Bob Wasserman

The time for choosing a successor to MIT President Jerome B. Wiesner may be soon at hand. Dr. Wiesner, who has served as President since 1969, is probably spending much of his time raising funds for the Leadership Campaign. But this drive is slated to end in 1980, and Wiesner himself is nearing sixty-five years of age, so his retirement may be announced in the near future.

The most evident choice to succeed Wiesner is Chancellor Paul Gray. Gray has spent a large part of his life as a leader in the Institute, becoming Chancellor, and last spring he even took over the main administrative duties of MIT while Wiesner worked on the Leadership Campaign. Gray has spent much of his administrative career at MIT, as well as being MIT's undergraduate president many years ago, and has MIT-citizens and alumni who would strongly support his candidacy. This long-term commitment to MIT has, of course, been considered for President, though, for as an MIT administrator he has not had the time to gain the recognition as a scientific figure and authority that it often required of the position. Gray assumed his post concomitantly with Wiesner in 1971 after serving as Assistant Provost to Wiesner and as Dean of the Faculty for some years. It seems possible that Gray may have a "jumping off" point when it comes to admission to MIT.

A new candidate for MIT's next President has recently arrived in the person of Dr. Robert Seamen, Dean of the School of Engineering. Seamen received graduate degrees from MIT before World War II, and was on the MIT Physics faculty from 1941-55. Seamen then left for Washington to work in the NASA serve as Secretary of the Air Force, and finally as the director of the US Energy Research and Development Administration. Though Seamen's experience in the field of administration is not currently substantial enough, his management skills and scientific reputation could give him an outside chance to become President of MIT.

Wiesner was National Science Advisor to President Kennedy before returning to MIT in 1959, and later President, and is already being talked about as a possible candidate. As a matter of fact, sure enough, another MIT man is current Science Advisor to the President, Dr. Frank Press. Press left for Washington last year, after heading the Department of Energy's Nuclear Regulatory Sciences at MIT. From Presidential Science Advisor to MIT President has been a familiar route before, as both Wiesner and James R. Killian, Press, like Seamen, may need more experience at MIT administration, but his national science renown makes him an attractive candidate for MIT's top job.

Prospects for a new president are also available in the inner circles of MIT's administration. Provost Walter Rosenblith, a noted scientist in the field of bio-electrical engineering, and a former Chairman of the MIT Faculty, is still interested in the presidency, but is over sixty-five, and this may discourage his selection. Assistant Provost Kenneth Wadleigh, Dean of the Graduate School, is a long-time MIT administrator. Provost Walter Rosenblith is a noted scientist in the field of bio-electrical engineering, and a former Chairman of the MIT Faculty, is still interested in the presidency, but is over sixty-five, and this may discourage his selection. Assistant Provost Kenneth Wadleigh, Dean of the Graduate School, is a long-time MIT administrator. Provost Walter Rosenblith is a noted scientist in the field of bio-electrical engineering, and a former Chairman of the MIT Faculty, is still interested in the presidency, but is over sixty-five, and this may discourage his selection. 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