Wiesner announces retirement

By Michael Texto

On June 30, 1980 President Jerome B. Wiesner will retire from his position as president of the Institute. The MIT Corporation has formed a Committee on the Presidency to begin the process of selecting a successor. Announcement of the retirement, and the organization of the Committee was made by Howard W. Johnson, Chairman of the Corporation, on Friday, December 1, 1978.

Wiesner, who will be 65 years old at the time of his retirement, received his B.S. (1937), M.S. (1938), and Ph.D (1939) degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Michigan. He served in various positions at the University of Michigan, the Library of Congress, the University of California, and MIT until 1961, when he became science advisor to President Kennedy.

Wiesner returned to MIT in 1964 as Dean of the School of Science and was appointed Provost in 1966 when present Corporation chairman John W. Johnson became President of the Institute. When Johnson became chairman in 1971, Wiesner was appointed MIT's thirteenth President.

Following his retirement as President, Wiesner expects to remain active in the life of the Institute. This is a custom that has been practiced by other former Presidents, notably Dr. James Killian, Dr. Julius A. Stratton, and Johnson.

Killian was President from 1949-1959 and is now Honorary Chairman and a Life Member of the Corporation. Stratton, President from 1959-1966 and now serves as President Emeritus and as a Life Member of the Corporation. Johnson was President from 1966 to the start of Wiesner's term in 1971, and is now Chairman of the Corporation. Because of its tradition, the President's will serve as consulting members to the Committee on the Presidency.

Johnson said that it is the Corporation's intention to begin a careful and deliberate course in selecting a new President and to seek the suggestions of all segments of the MIT community before making a final decision on Wiesner's successor.

The Committee on the Presidency will be chaired by Eugene M. Müller, a Life Member of the Corporation.

Humansities Mazlish steps down

By Gordon Hunter

After five years as the Head of the Department of Humanities, Professor of History Bruce Mazlish has announced that he will step down as department head this June.

The announcement comes as discussions about reorganizing the department are starting. Mazlish says that he will leave in July or August 1980, and "will wait for what fits in." Mazlish said that there are no immediate plans to find his replacement, nor are there any concrete plans for restructuring the department if it will be restructured. "Everything is fluid at this point," he explained.

Mazlish said that he will set up time-tables and oversee the discussions on the future of the department in his remaining time as head of the department. He stated that his preference in the reorganization is the development toward autonomy for the "top left corner" that makes up the department. He pointed to the fact that each of these sections is a separate department at most other universities.

Saying he would serve three of the department with reluctance in 1974, pointing out the fact that he was not a candidate for the position. He said that the situation was "difficult" at the time, with department morale very low and divisions still present from the 1960s. He added he was also worried about his own effectiveness in the position and the effect it would have on his own work.

While the job was "not pure joy," Mazlish said, "I liked it because it was a chance to help build the department." He explained that he was being helpful to his colleagues and having a role outside of his own work.

Mazlish disliked having to mediate between administrative and faculty needs. He also disliked not having enough time to listen to the problems that the junior department head put to him.

After stepping down, Mazlish plans to go on sabbatical in order to work on a large book tentatively entitled Toward a Science of Men. He said that the book would explore the reasons why anyone would want a science that would connect all the social sciences. He explained that this book would not be very ambitious and that he felt that all of his work has pointed toward it.

Mazlish was an early figure in the development of "psychology" or the philosophy of observation. Calling himself a "maverick historian," Mazlish had been dissatisfied with rational explanations of history and started to explore the psychological and unconscious aspects of the people involved in making and reporting history.

Press talks on China

By Eric Schlar

"There is a great deal we can learn from China, and of course there is a great deal they can learn from us," concluded Presidential Science Advisor Frank Press during his talk on "Science and Technology Cooperation with the People's Republic of China" Friday night in Room 26-100. The talk was based on Press's recent trip to China and was sponsored by the MIT chapter of Sigma Xi, a scientific honor society.

Press, who is on leave from his post as Robert R. Shrock Professor of Geophysics in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, stressed that although this trip included the heads of the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Institutes of Health and the US Geological Survey, the Department of Defense was not represented. Military aid was not under discussion said Press, adding that "the President is not going to export military items" to China.

Press briefly discussed such objections to the proposed aid as the low level of scientific research in China, the Chinese human rights violations, the Chinese administration of the Geological Survey, the Department of Defense, and divisions still present from the 1960s. He remarked repeatedly that the current Chinese administration of the Chinese National Science Foundation was doing a great deal to improve the situation.

Press pointed out that "the Chinese are capable of being important to this country, important to the whole world."

Press attributed China's recent interest in availability to the Chinese scientists who have been recently invited to the US. It is clear that the Chinese revolution of the 1960's which halted the progress of science by closing the universities, denouncing scientists, and introducing a system of apprenticeship for the low level of scientific training which did occur. He remarked repeatedly that the current Chinese administration of the Chinese National Science Foundation was doing a great deal to improve the situation.

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