By Jay Closs

One of the leaders of corporate world expressed his views on South African policy, energy problems, and Federal regulation last Thursday at the MIT East Campus Hotel in an exclusive interview with The Tech.

Ford Motor Company Executive Vice President Lewis R. Ross, directs Ford's Diversified Products Operations, one of Ford's three divisions which manufactures steel, glass, plastic, aerospace, and tractor, and aerospace products. Ross began as a research engineer with Ford in 1933 and was elected to the Ford executive position in 1975.

Queried on whether Ford sold any products to the South African government, Ross stated, "We do not sell directly because we sell to dealers. But clearly, vehicles do go to the South African government."

Ross reiterated the Ford policy which prohibits sales to South African armed forces and police. Ross said, "We do it in this position, and their position was that a South African company could sell to the police and military."

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Returning to domestic matters, "The United States is not ready for a national energy policy," said Ross as he discussed the effect of possible fuel shortages on DSA search.

"The general consumer doesn't believe there's an energy problem; he doesn't sense it in any way -- you're going to have to have spot shortages, fuel shortages, and other minor symptoms that there is a problem before the United States is going to have a national energy policy."

Ford, along with other automakers, will be striving to meet Federal fuel-economy requirements until the 1985 model year. Ford will have to spend an estimated $20 billion during the next six years in order to meet Federal fuel-economy and safety regulations.

"That's more money than we've earned in our entire company in 1963 through the end of 1977," remarked Ross.

Fuel economy requirements are for an average 19 miles per gallon for all models for the 1979 model year, increasing quickly to a 26 mpg average in 1983, and then leveling off to the final 1985 goal of 27.5 mpg. Ross sees them as "a major challenge to the present technology systems."

"My feelings about the environmental movement is that it's a good movement, but that it was directed at the wrong problem," surmised Ross. "Plants, in the United States produce more pollution, as we recognize pollution that bothers humans, than automobiles do. They're in the smoke stacks, and that attention has been towards the automobile and I think it should have been towards the plant. Most plants and people are concerned about smoke, coke, and sulfates and particulates. Plants tend to produce these."

"Automotive environmental standards, like the new one for '80, it will cost $150 to the average consumer," said Ross, "and by 1980 the additional bill will reach $800-$1000 per car.

Ford vice-president Lewis Ross replies to students' questions at an open discussion. (Photo by John Bonsen)

Several universities, including MIT, have considered or may consider divestment from their investments in companies involved in South Africa. If these schools really wished not to involve themselves with companies operating in South Africa, Ross said, "then they ought to refuse all grants, all matching funds, and do everything. They don't. They'll just do something that doesn't mean anything -- and that means something, they keep."

Concorning corporate policy and planning in South Africa, Ross said, "If you agree we ought to refuse all grants, all matching funds, and do everything, they feel they ought to do, but not be hypocritical about it."

Abington resident, Irwin Simonides, remarked that the DSA should have a "committee of students, to recognize and to encourage the diversity of the student body." He felt that divestment was based upon a desire by the students for "professional stature." This could mean success as a dean, or as an academician; the individual should "be able to demonstrate ability" to acquire that understanding. A DSA should have, in Simonides' opinion, understand "what kind of education and what kind of people" are involved at MIT.

Finally, the candidate should have "participation of the students," do not discriminate on the basis of sex or race in the final selection.

In response to an inquiry by one of the 30 students present at the DSA meeting, Simonides said that MIT "will have an affirmative action search," but that the Institute is "looking for the best," and would not discriminate on the basis of sex or race in the final selection.

Nominations Sought

The Irwin Sizer Award in honor of Irwin Sizer, former Dean of the Graduate School from 1967 to 1975, presently President of the Science Fund and Consultant to the Resource Development Office, and to encourage innovations and improvements in education at MIT. The Graduate Student Council, established in 1975 the honor society to "recognize the most significant improvement to MIT education." The recipient of this award which is to be accompanied by a cash award of $150 will be determined by a committee of the Graduate Student Council in closed session. Any person or group in the Institute community is eligible.

Nominations are due to be submitted, in the student's name, to the Graduate Student Council Office, Wallace Building, room 50-110, no later than April 20, 1979.

Previous awards have been given to the leaders of the Winning Program (1975), Independent Activities Program (1976), Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (1977), and the Innovation Center at Sloan (1978).