Chomsky lecture misguided

To the editor:

A tragic aspect of life at MIT is the way that extraordinary men insist upon reducing himself to the level of a glorified dolt. Noam Chomsky's IAP lecture discussion "American Media And Foreign Policy" was an open-sor noble catalogue of ridicule; main- feasting on insult. Professor Chomsky's thesis was that American intellectuals are now and always have been a servile, cowardly class dutifully mouthing sinister orthodoxies handed down to them by their political leaders. Intellectuals as reporters for the news media refuse to object to the official line because they fear reprisals from editors, publishers and station owners. Graduate stu- dents hold their fire because they know that by exposing their political leaders they can kiss goodbye to whatever chance they have of getting a good job.

The speaker supported his argument with a set of factual examples from the World War I era. America in 1916, he said, was united for peace. Considerable intervention- istic sentiment sprang up the moment Germany invaded Belgium in August, 1914. In response to President Wilson's recommendations in his December, 1915, State of the Union Address, Congress ordered the regular army expanded, new battle ships built, and a Council of National Defense created. On January 11, 1917, Germany an- nounced a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. The contents of the Zimmermann telegram were disclosed on February 16. On March 12 and March 19, American ships on the high seas were sunk without warning. Wilson petitioned Congress for a declaration of war on April 2 and got one-few days later after lip- ised votes of 82-6 and 373-50. As for Lippmann and Dewey, Professor Chomsky's stated source for their huge influence, Carol Gruber's Mere And Minerva, about the former says nothing. Dewey before America's entry actually stood for non- intervention. Gruber reporting: "...on the very eve of interven- tion when it was certain that the country soon would be at war, Dewey wrote an almost lyrical tribute to America's hesitation to fight for a cause that was not its own." (pp.89-90).

How Professor Chomsky can claim that the press refuses to criticize US foreign policy defies belief, what with memories still fresh of the Pentagon Papers and of the coverage of the Vietnam War. He admitted in the same lec- ture that his principal source of information about current American foreign policy is — the newspapers! And it is simply un- true that graduate students refuse to object to past and present American foreign policy. If a PhD candidate has the support of his advisor, he can speak out without fear of forfeiting his chances in academia. How else to explain the excellent positions held down by New Left historians Lloyd Gardner (Rutgers), Diane Shaver Cleason (Berkeley), Barton Bernstein (Stanford) and William Appelmann Williams (Oregon State)?

Professor Chomsky is, to all appearances, charming, helpful, cooperative, eloquent and, in his initial field of linguistics, brilliant. Why he insists upon degrading himself by insulting the good peo- ple of a good country is a mystery. I wish I knew what words I could use to dissuade him from his course. If I knew what they were, I would immediately use them.

Roger Kalb

Posters for a draft rally removed

To the editor:

I used to wonder why various activist groups would resort to spray paint to post signs and slogans. Defacing a building seemed no way to popularize an organization. But now I under- stand the difficulty of expressing an opinion in even so supposedly open a community as a college campus. Yesterday a friend and I posted announcements for a demonstration against the draft on several free bulletin boards and at an approved announce- ment on our own club bulletin board. From a matter of hours, all the posters were torn down. It is bad enough that certain persons feel free to destroy club property. What worries me is that apparently some people who feel a need to go to war are willing to sup- press freedom of speech and the right to assemble in order to in- sure that young people will be forced to fight against their will. What remains to be defended?

Please, if you perceive a need for the draft, why not choose a more rational form of expression than anger and oppression?

Elizabeth Peralta '82

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