Consequences of a nuclear attack

To the Editor:
Stuart Glisson’s article on civil defense [The Tech, Feb. 13, 1981] managed to discuss solutions without mentioning the problems. A new cold war seems to be starting, and perhaps we should consider what might happen if it breaks out. Apart from noting that the Cambridge area would suffer “total devastation,” Mr. Glisson doesn’t consider the consequences of a nuclear attack on the MIT area.

MIT and Draper Laboratories are high priority targets. Draper Labs is the principal designer of guidance systems for American strategic systems, and in case of war most of MIT’s research would be for the military. It seems reasonable to assume that the Soviet Union would command the Draper-MIT area worth at least one warhead. Let us suppose that one 500 kiloton warhead is aimed at (or near) the center of the Institute, or at Draper Labs, it makes little difference. (One SS-18 missile carries 10 warheads of this size, so this is a relatively small attack.) From The Effects of Nuclear Weapons, published by the Department of Defense and Energy, one finds the following:

1) Multistory reinforced concrete buildings within a two mile radius of ground zero would be severely damaged. This means that “collapse is generally implied.”

2) Immediate radiation from the blast will kill everyone within 20,000 rads; 10,000 rads would be lethal at 50 miles from ground zero.

3) In a region up to 100 miles from ground zero, all vegetation and crops would be destroyed.

4) The area of contamination would be enormous. (An SS-18 missile can carry 10 warheads, if they all detonate within a 2 mile radius.)

The article suggests that we can survive a nuclear attack if we are prepared for it. Any sensible adversary will want to make sure that we don’t survive. Therefore, having a reputation for technological expertise can be a liability. It is also worth noting that if The Tech knows that we are to be evacuated to Greenfield, then so do the military planners in the Soviet Union. I’m sure they wouldn’t mind lobbing a few warheads in that direction as well, just to make sure.

Civil defense against a nuclear war is like applying a band-aid to lysozyme. The best way to ensure our survival is to reduce the risk of war. We need prevention, not useless first aid.

John Lepingwell ’81

Institute not supporting CASH

(Continued from page 4)

CASH has made progress in the last 6 months. In addition to having a good chance of raising over $10,000 in outside aid in its first year, CASH has in place an extensive system for locating scholarship sources and matching applicants with the appropriate sources. However, many problems still exist, the largest being a lack of support from the MIT administration.

The help that CASH can give to MIT students is sorely needed, but in spite of this, the center has received minimal support from The Tech.

Dental Bridge

To the Editor:
The Metropolitan District Commission does not wish to get involved in a controversy concerning the designation of the bridge along Massachusetts Avenue which connects Boston and Cambridge. We do suggest that the legislature could exercise the option of naming the structure for neither Harvard nor MIT. This could be done and still have a name which was both descriptive and academically identifiable if the designation were changed to the Tufts Dental Bridge.

Paul F. McDevitt
MDC Legislative Director

Letters to the Editor are written by members of the MIT community and represent the opinions of the writer. The Tech will attempt to publish all letters received, and will consider columns or stories. All submissions should be typed, preferably triple spaced, on a 57-character line. Unsolicited letters will not be printed. Authors' names will be withheld upon request.

Don’t advocate higher costs

To the Editor:
The Tech is advocating higher educational costs for MIT students, according to the editorials of 2/24. First, they proposed reduction of the class size to 2500. With educational overhead remaining the same, The Tech is thus requesting a tuition increase of another 5 percent. Responsible student leaders should be rationalizing communicating with the administration about cost-cutting, admitting more students, or adopting other budget measures. Secondly, The Tech encouraged students to be “responsible to social conscience” and support unionization of the Coop. There can be no doubt that unionization would increase costs with students being the ultimate losers.

Steven Pet G

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