To the Editor:

I would like to express some personal opinions about Draper and Lincoln Laboratories. Your Wednesday, Jan. 21, 1987 article, "This with Lincoln questioned," suggests that the ghost of the Draper Laboratory divestiture has reappeared.

I believe that the Draper Laboratory divestiture occurred only because MIT's leaders at the time lacked the fortitude to properly deal with the violent and destructive activities of some students (who should have been expelled) and some faculty (who should have been fired for cause).

When MIT divested itself of the Instrumentation Laboratory (now Draper Laboratory), the administration claimed that Draper did not "fit in" with MIT. Professors Louis D. Smullin '39 and Richard A. Cowan G advance the same argument with respect to Lincoln Laboratory.

They ignore the fact that thousands of MIT students received, and continue to receive, part-time jobs, training and thesis supervision at Draper and at Lincoln.

Smullin's statement that "the intellectual coupling between MIT and Lincoln Laboratories is very small" repeats the fallacious arguments used at the time of the Draper divestiture.

Draper was divested only because the MIT administration did not have the courage to cope with violent left-wing idealogues. The divestiture made no more audacious, intellectual or financial sense at that time than the proposed divestiture of Lincoln Labs now.

One suspects that Lincoln's lack of profitability (and Draper's dearth primarily from Lincoln's (and Draper's) participation in the defense of this country. Despite MIT's protestations to the contrary, the main reason that Lincoln wasn't divested along with Draper in the early 1970's was that the riot took place in Cambridge and did not occur far enough away to inconvenience Lincoln.

MIT receives enormous academic, intellectual and financial advantages from being a part of this great free society, whereas government-owned Cowan can sometimes criticize without being sentenced to jail or a psychiatric hospital.

As for "the Reagan administration's first-strike nuclear policy," this is nonsense. Americans have never been so at risk as killing people, even during war. More people have died in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos under three years of Communist peace than died there during twelve years of American war.

We had first strike, in fact, "only-strike" capability in the late 1960s, and we didn't use it. Our concerns today must be that the Soviets can develop a first strike capability. Last year and the next years of Soviet oppression, allowing time for America's ever lower standards of free society to finally recognize the differences between the relatively minor failings of free societies and the relatively great evils of Communist police states. While trying to divorce himself and the Institute from the defense of this country, perhaps Cowan should reflect on one great lesson of human history, a lesson which dates as far back as the time of Moses: People who are not willing to fight for freedoms don't get to keep their very long.

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Institute benefits from Lincoln Labs

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