By V. Michael Bove and Harold A. Storn

A computer "virus" with an unknown side-effect spread across the Internet network Wednesday night and early Thursday morning, hitting educational, business, and government computers sites nationwide. At MIT, Digital Equipment Corporation VAX minicomputer users reported seeing a program running the popular UNIX operating system with what was believed to be a virus in the Media Laboratory, the Laboratory for Computer Science, and elsewhere.

Although the virus does not appear to destroy any files, it is not known yet what other effects it might have on the infected computers. "We are trying to disassemble it to figure out what it does," said Andrei I. Schiller, '79, a network manager for Telecommunications Systems.

At about 9 pm Wednesday, just before warning messages began to arrive from the University of California at Berkeley, NASA's Ames Research Laboratory, Carnegie-Mellon University, and other affected sites, Project Xenix, SM '88, a research special interest group with the Media Laboratory, observed that a large number of computers on the Internet were running on the Media Lab VAX. Xenix closed communications with the rest of campus to prevent additional spread of the virus, and a group of staff and graduate students were told to try figuring out what was happening. "The target machines seem to be the VAXes and Sun-S3 running UNIX," he said.

The virus was designed to take advantage of bugs in Berkeley UNIX's sendmail software to infect a host computer, Schiller said.

As far as can be determined by Media Lab staff, the first warning piece of mail arrives at a computer and causes a small program to be compiled and executed. This program in turn opens a network connection to some already-infected machine of the same type, replaces a number of pieces of local system software, and infects itself. The results of the changes to system programs are not yet fully known, but appear to include using password files to attempt replication by other network protocols.

Although "just about everybody else [on campus] is down," the virus "has not affected Athena as at all," according to Prof. Steve Immerman, director of campus activities complex.

Most colleges, a former MIT student and co-founder of Newbury Comics, said that he expects Newbury Comics to be moved into the Student Center and fully open for business by the end of November at the latest, Immerman said.

Dreese stated that there have been problems with some of the Student Center tenants over the labor costs of the renovations. Apparently, the sore point centers on the fact that the con- tracted union labor can renovate the center faster, making the renova- tion renovations, he explained. And, as Immerman is lobbying to get more pay for better service and value, the ten- ants have been working for the renovators to their spaces, he added.

The college presently in USG include BU, Boston College, Harvard, MIT, Wellesley, Tufts, Northeastern, Babson, Simmons, and Emerson. According to the USG Constitution, which has not yet been ratified by the Senate, the college's objectives are to "promote the interest of students in the Greater Boston area." A previous attempt at organizing Boston-area student government organizations, the Boston Buy Coalition, failed two years ago.

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by Dawn Nolt

The Undergraduate Association Council voted last night to join the United Student Government, a newly-formed coalition of ten Boston-area student government organizations.

The organization was founded by the Boston College, Harvard University, Student Union, the student government at BU, in response to problems that BU encountered in admitting alcohol and cigarette smoking in its residence buildings, BU Student President John Silber recently instituted a rule prohibiting dormitory residents from having guests in their rooms after 11 pm. Other colleges are not far behind in forming an organization to collectively deal with student concerns.

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by Casimir Wierzybinski

American elections hinge on African-American votes, some say. So if anyone wanted to predict the outcome of the next election—which shouldn't be too difficult—and if that someone wanted to be scientific, he would look at the candidates' fiscal poli-