

SCIENCE ACTION COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MARCH FOURTH STUDENT STATEMENT

Science and technology have contributed greatly to the material well-being of some Americans; for them, technology has eliminated many of the hardships of life. But for other Americans, caught in the chaos of our inner cities or in the barrenness of rural poverty, for most of the people in Africa, Asia, and South America, the benefits of technology are nearly unknown. Indeed, it may be argued that technological advance has lowered the quality of life for many of the world's citizens.

As young scientists we have waited for America to apply her vast technological resources toward solutions of international social and economic problems. We grew up during long years of Cold War. We continued to be persuaded that more sophisticated weapons systems were needed for our national well-being, and our elders helped provide the facilities to build them.

In the Sixties, America discovered her poor.⁽¹⁾ She awoke to the pollution of her air and water, to the congestion of her cities, and to the sterility of the ever-increasing advertisement and consumption of "technological miracles". We awaited action on these problems. We expected America to negotiate arms control on the basis of "stable deterrent" and bring resources to bear on the solution of environmental and social problems. But instead, America undertook to bring democracy to Viet Nam. We watched with increasing disbelief as America brought technological expertise to an underdeveloped nation in the form of napalm, B-52's, anti-personnel weapons, strategic hamlets. THE WAR CONTINUES. Many scientists who previously felt that there were bureaucratic and institutional limits to the degree of inhumanity of which America is capable have now lost faith in the ability of their government to make proper use of technology. This feeling is exacerbated by the proposal to increase further our strategic weaponry: Washington threatens to deploy Anti-Ballistic Missile systems (ABM), Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV), and continues to work in Chemical and Biological Warfare (CBW). These follow a ludicrous procession of such highly tested necessities as the F-111 and the XB-70. We now read⁽²⁾ of an absurd new development known as SCAD, which is an excuse for building a new fleet of manned bombers (cost: \$10 billion).

We feel that the time has come for scientists and engineers to assert responsibility for the fruits of their research. We must come to maturity and realize our potential power in a technological society, and the moral burden we must assume.

SACC, through actions such as the March 4 research stoppage, is attempting to organize scientists to form an "effective counterweight to the military-industrial complex".⁽³⁾ We cite the following predicaments which arise from the increasingly militaristic

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posture of our society and from the inability of its institutions to respond adequately to human needs:

- 1) The defense department consumes over 70 per cent of the national budget; it is the largest conglomerate in the world and has commensurate influence on the character of many American institutions. Senators Fulbright, McCarthy, McGovern, and others warn of the powerful role which the military-industrial complex has assumed in the policy-making process. This has resulted in blatant violations of legislative prerogatives by the executive branch, as with the Tonkin Gulf incident.
- 2) The universities have not been immune to military influence. Many departments in many universities are dependent on DOD funds. Institutions such as M.I.T. derive income for operating laboratories at which classified weapons research is carried out. Through devices such as Project Themis⁽⁴⁾ the DOD seeks to increase its influence in American colleges and universities.
- 3) Graduate students are finding it increasingly difficult to get jobs in university research positions. Although we entered graduate school when pure research was in favor with the DOD, the cost of Viet Nam, and perhaps the results of the Hindsight Study⁽⁵⁾ have decreased the willingness of the DOD to continue to sponsor our research. Because the facilities for using our technological abilities in socially productive ways are nearly non-existent, many of us are channelled to employment in military-oriented research (e.g. to build an ABM guidance system).
- 4) The demand for manpower to fight the war in Viet Nam has made the draft a major threat to a generation of students. It is Selective Service policy that the pressures generated by the draft on youth serve the highest national purpose by channelling talent into areas of national "value". Since when is it the military's privilege to define our national values? See the Hershey Memorandum.
- 5) America is confronted with a gamut of domestic crises which demand the massive reallocation of its resources. With growing tensions tearing at our society caused by racial injustice, poverty, poor, irrelevant and often autocratic education, inadequate housing, dying cities, air and water pollution, and an atmosphere of violence which can, in part, be traced to our frenzied military activities of the past thirty years, we must publicly deplore the abandon with which the government commits resources to fighting ill-defined enemies in Asia and Latin America, and to building unnecessary and dangerous new weapons such as ABM, MIRV, SCAD, CBW.
- 6) The precollege education which poor and black ghetto students receive is insufficient to allow them to enter colleges such as M.I.T.⁽⁶⁾ Moreover, the education which these colleges offer is easily accessible only to a person with a white, middle class cultural background; present curricula are not suited in method or content to the background and interests of all students.

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If we are to develop a new technology which will cope with the environmental and social problems of the cities, it seems axiomatic that more black scientists and engineers be educated: a technology for all of the people must involve all of the people.

SACC urges you to join us in making a symbolic gesture on March 4. Along with thousands of other scientists across the country, we ask you to withhold your research work for one day --- not because your work is, in itself, objectionable, (it may be of great social importance) but in order to protest the whole context in which it is done.

At M.I.T. on March 4, we offer a program of discussion related to the issues raised here. See the accompanying program.

We hope that you will consider joining SACC. The initiation is simple. Come to room 14N-218 and ask what you can do. We need people to write, rap, do research and organize for ongoing programs. Some of the activities in which we are involved are:

α) SACC encourages professors and graduate assistants to explore with their students the social and political relevance of course material and to talk about the meaning and consequence of a scientific career. They should consider to what extent the courses at M.I.T. conform to the requirements of large corporations and the military. SACC urges students to insist that their classes during the week preceding March 4 be devoted to a discussion of these issues. We call this activity a "teach-out".

β) In January, SACC drafted and circulated an open letter to Dr. Lee DuBridge, President Nixon's science advisor, attacking the complicity of the universities in the military-industrial complex, and recommending increased emphasis on scientific contributions to socially productive areas. The letter was signed by 182 faculty members and graduate students at M.I.T.

γ) SACC recently participated in the ABM meeting at Reading, Mass., at which representatives of the Army tried and failed to quiet local opposition to the deployment of Sentinel missiles in that community. SACC is examining means for establishing closer liaison between scientists and the citizens of Reading, in an effort to stop deployment of ABM.

δ) SACC is also actively organizing among scientists working for industry in the Boston area, both to enlist their participation in the March 4 activities, and to obtain their long-range cooperation in creating an effective political force within the scientific community.

ε) Critical among SACC's activities is the effort to extend support for the March 4 movement across the country. Groups at Cornell and Yale are well underway in organizing similar demonstrations, and several other universities have indicated their cooperation. SACC is in contact with other organizations which are working on parallel activities.

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FOOTNOTES

- (1) Harrington, M., Toward a Democratic Left, Macmillan (1968); page 26.

1947: poorest 20% of population received 5% of the income
1964: same 20% still only received 5%

1947: next 20% received 12% of the income
1964: same 20% received 12% of the income

Thus, bottom 40% of Americans got 17% of the income.
The top 5% got about 17%.

"These figures underestimate the evil, since they are taken from tax returns; and the highest income recipients hire expensive lawyers and accountants to conceal as much of their wealth as possible, while the rest of the nation pays as it goes."

- (2) This weapon consists of a large mother bomber which can release up to 30 small unmanned planes with radar cross-sections identical to the parent. Each small plane carries a kiloton-range nuclear warhead, while the mother is loaded with high megaton bombs. New York Times, Feb. 4, 1969

New York Times, Sunday, Feb. 9, 1969, Section 4, pg. 14:

"But the two weapons systems (SCAD & MIRV) also open the door to something that has not existed for some time: the possibility of a first strike capability with which the United States conceivably could launch a surprise attack that would destroy most of Soviet weapons before they could be launched."

- (3) Fulbright, J. W. Jr., "The War and its Effects-II", Congressional Record, Dec. 13, 1967.

- (4) SACC Information Sheet, Page 4.

- (5) SACC Information Sheet, Page 4.

- (6) At M.I.T. there are 22 black students out of a total population of 7,700. In 1968, nine black high school students were offered admission. Seven accepted.

