

Science Action Coordinating Committee

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An Open Letter to Undergraduates

Undergraduates, although immersed in a protective collegiate environment and sheltered by student deferments, still play an essential role in the implementation of our country's policies.

Within a few years, the student will have to choose his career. While those who are already committed find it impossible to terminate their work and are forced into moral conflicts, the student has complete freedom in the choice of both career and employer. Our country's day to day affairs have become heavily dependent on science and technology. The majority of scientific work is related to government agencies. Of these, the Department of Defense dwarfs all. High salaries, increased security (e.g., occupational deferments), and lack of additional opportunities leads to a concentration of the well qualified MIT graduates in key scientific, governmental, and corporate positions.

The events of recent years, however, show that it is time for us to re-examine the scientist's position and work. Much of it involves projects connected with the nation's so-called "defense" needs. Under this pretext, work is planned and carried out on Chemical Biological Warfare (amount classified), new multi-headed ballistic missiles (\$12 billion), a new fighter aircraft (\$12 billion), a new strategic bomber (\$15 billion), and an anti-ballistic missile system (\$50 billion).

As the United States expands its overkill capacity from 50 to 200 tons of TNT per Russian and Chinese, many have come to realize that continuation of such work can only lead to increased chances of world disaster. Arthur Goldberg recently stated that he felt mankind's chances of surviving this century are no more than 50%.

While the United States has the highest standard of living in the world, it continues to rank no higher than fifth or even tenth in such social categories as infant mortality rates, prevention of various diseases, in support of the poor (30-40 million Americans) and mentally and physically incapacitated, in transportation and pollution. Our defense budget consumes over 70% of government funds and this percentage is rising. This year, even though the cost of the Vietnam war dropped \$3 billion, total defense allocations rose \$1/2 billion.

On March 4, members of the faculty and graduate student body will suspend research for that day, both in protest against the present misuse of scientific and technological knowledge and in order to hold discussions dealing with the issues involved. Among these are the weapons culture, the paucity of alternate areas of employment, the almost total control of research funding by the Department of Defense. Such figures as Hans Bethe and George Wald, Nobel laureates, and Senator George McGovern will participate.

Students CAN and WILL decide the direction future technology will take; whether to continue the channeling of knowledge into destructive ends or whether to concentrate on alleviating the immense social and environmental problems our country and the world faces. It is urgent that we attend these seminars and talks which are of paramount importance to all of us.

- 2 -

Let us call on our professors to devote the week preceding March 4 to discussions of these topics. We should ask them to discuss the social and political implications of their research and our course material. We must have in-class dialogue concerning the purposes of our education and its relevance to the world about us.

Join the TEACH-OUT!

Join us on MARCH 4!

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