

THE AEL SIT IN - - - -

A PERSONAL COMMENTARY

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I. THE ISSUES

The issues in the current crisis are morality, academic freedom, classified research and legality. They are separate issues and should be treated as such. No attempt should be made to control one issue (i.e., morality) through the mechanism of another issue, (i.e., classified research).

1.1 DIFFERENT ISSUES ARE SEEN AS MOST SIGNIFICANT BY FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS.

The correlation of main issue with university group is roughly as follows: morality - Coalition and students; academic freedom - faculty; classified research - STL staff; legality - everyone, but heavily STL.

1.2 MORALITY AND CLASSIFIED RESEARCH

The two issues must be considered separately. Research is morally neutral; the use of the end result of the research may be subject to moral judgement.

1.3 ACADEMIC FREEDOM

A ban on all classified research will not necessarily increase academic freedom, may lead to increased militarism, and will certainly affect a significant number of STL students.

1.4 LEGALITY VS MORALITY

It is important to follow campus judicial procedures; the alternative is the use of outside force.

1.5 ON WARFARE

Warfare is an unfortunate necessity in today's world, and peace between large nations is maintained primarily by a balance of power and military capabilities.

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I. THE ISSUES

The issues of the current crisis are morality, classified research, academic freedom and legality.

1.1 DIFFERENT ISSUES ARE SEEN AS MOST SIGNIFICANT BY FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS.

Part of the difficulty in communications between faculty, staff and students has been the relative assignment of importance to the various issues. In the interest of identifying these differences, I will make some generalizations about them, with the certain danger that many persons will not be properly represented.

The faculty will argue against classified research because academic freedom is somewhat jeopardized by this type of research. My guess is, however, that they would be very much opposed to taking an institutional stand against classified research on moral grounds.

The students, particularly in the Coalition, are concerned about morality. They would like the University to take an institutional stand on a moral issue, an action which is antithetical to academic freedom. They also propose to control what is essentially a moral issue through the restriction of classified research. This difficult task will be discussed further in the following section.

The staff, and here I refer mostly to STL, is concerned primarily with classified research and generally does not view the research (as distinct from the use of the final products) as immoral. They question the legality of the sit-in tactic.

1.2 MORALITY AND CLASSIFIED RESEARCH

It should be recognized that morality and secrecy (classified research) are separate topics. Immoral activities (as judged by the Coalition) can be either classified or unclassified (indeed, abundant examples are found in both categories). Likewise, classified research can be judged either moral or immoral. It is likely, however, that more of the classified research would be judged immoral by the Coalition than unclassified research.

The present crisis is closely related to how one feels about the actions of the United States government in Viet Nam and other countries around the world. A large number of the Coalition members is convinced that the U. S. is not using its military capability for so-called moral ends, but instead is using it to suppress "just" revolutions against "oppressive" governments and to exploit poorer people throughout the world. This seems to be the basis for the present judgements of immorality on military establishments and on classified research in general.

I think, however, that if our government was judged to be using its vast military capability in a moral and constructive way, which did not suppress the "Third World" people, no outrage against the military-industrial complex would occur.

Many people outside the Coalition have similar feelings about the actions of the U. S. government. Their emphasis, however, tends to center on the excessive spending involved in military weaponry.

An attack on classified research will not solve the moral question, however. It is obvious that this attack on classified and war-related research is a symptom of a deeper concern for morality that pervades much of our country today. Because the furor over classified research is merely a symptom of this deeper concern, it is unlikely that actions directed solely against classified research will significantly change the underlying problem, particularly when one considers the almost insignificant proportion of the total classified research represented by the activities at Stanford.

Classified research has a place in the University. University classified research can lead to a necessary and valuable "watchdog" function for modern expensive and highly technical weapon systems. Indeed, one should realize from past history that much of the dissent concerning large expensive weapon systems has come from people in universities who had access to and capabilities in classified research. Should we eliminate our least-biased source of surveillance and dissent?

1.3 ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The focus of restrictions proposed as a result of the AEL sit-in is on classified research. It is becoming increasingly evident that restrictions addressed solely to classified work will not adequately solve the moral issue. Because of the current emotional feeling against classified research, the older issue of academic propriety is being raised in support of what is still a moral question.

The academic freedom issue has been the subject of considerable discussion in the past, and I do not want to belabor the point here. The basic objection is that classification (or any secrecy procedure) restricts the flow of information and knowledge. One can perhaps justify broadening the access to some work of a classified nature; this was, in part, the intent of the Baxter Committee.

A ban on all classified research, however, not only fails to solve the moral problem, it does not necessarily bear on the issue of academic freedom. It is possible to have classified work in which only one or two exact numbers, such as frequency ranges, are classified; the rest of the work can be fully disclosed. The major virtue of the blanket ban is that it requires the least thought and can be enacted hastily.

It is particularly important to examine the potential power of a commission that is set up to review the moral implications of certain projects. The imposition of a set of moral rules on the faculty and staff may lead to a much greater infringement on academic freedom than does classified research.

1.4 LEGALITY VS MORALITY

It must be realized also that legality and morality are separate issues. There are many laws, both within the university and outside, that must be obeyed but do not represent the moral feelings of large segments of the affected population. One often hears the argument that it is difficult to legislate morality, and this certainly will be the case

for the sit-in issues. It is evident that the present guidelines for classified research do not properly solve the morality problem. Again, it will be very difficult to solve a moral problem by the use of restrictions against classified research; they are separate problems.

It is not my intention to minimize the importance of judicial procedures at Stanford. Indeed, if the procedures existing at Stanford are found to be inadequate, it will be necessary to call in outside forces to achieve order on the campus. People have a right to go about their work peacefully without the disruptions of sit-ins and other activities. For general order, some prohibition on activities of this type is necessary and must be enforced.

It is also necessary to provide a means for airing the grievances of individuals or groups who believe that they are not being given an adequate hearing and resort to such tactics to produce action. We must construct a system that will permit the effective expression of ideas for change so that future sit-ins and activities of this type will be immoral in their own right and not an expression of moral indignation, as is now the case.

1.5 ON WARFARE

1.5.1. Can we rid the world of warfare?

There has been a great deal of discussion prior to and during the sit-in on the need to wage war and to develop the technology and weaponry of war. I personally agree that warfare, weapons, and the technology to exterminate large masses of human beings are reprehensible; however, I do feel that this work is an unfortunate necessity at the present time.

Even though I believe all would agree that warfare is undesirable and may, in fact, be immoral, no other method is as effective as warfare for settling differences of opinion. Just as there are college administrators, faculty, and trustees who will not listen to students (thus causing students to stage a sit-in to be heard), so nations do not pay attention to each other unless they are threatened or attacked. Although the two cases are different in degree, they both involve the application of force to bring about an awareness of the ideas and goals of others. One would hope that warfare could end as peacefully and as satisfactorily as the present sit-in, at least up to the present time.

1.5.2 Defense vs Offense

One often hears that it is difficult to separate the capabilities of defense vs offense. I believe that the need to make such a differentiation is not as important as it may first appear, because the most important requirement is to establish a deterrent. This deterrent is aided by a strong defense and is also aided by a strong offensive capability, particularly in the recent cold-war situations.

This lack of need for differentiation between defense and offense applies even to chemical and biological warfare and which is, perhaps, the most objectionable subject to be considered in recent weeks. It is truly unfortunate that nations will consider using such types of warfare as a means for extending their power and control, but it is true that both large and small nations can and will use such techniques when necessary.

Both sides are likely to use restraint in the face of the fear of similar retaliation. Few of us will refuse to acknowledge the repugnant nature of such techniques, but by the same token, there are many of us who are reluctantly forced to conclude that both a defensive and an offensive capability must be maintained if we are to protect the type of government under which we presently live.

It is important at this point to note again that the argument of necessity is separate from the argument that addresses itself to the way in which military capabilities are used.

II. TACTICS

2.1 THE SIT-IN

I find many people, within and outside the April 3 Coalition, who believe that the necessity to utilize the sit-in tactic to achieve changes was unfortunate, but it is apparent that no other more effective alternative exists. We should take note of this fact and attempt to provide effective mechanisms for instituting changes so that illegal and possibly immoral tactics will not be necessary in the future to produce needed changes.

2.2 VIOLENCE AND DISRUPTION MUST BE AVOIDED.

The restraint shown on both sides in this sit-in is commendable; there have been many instances where violence could have erupted but did not. I believe that a violent ending to the confrontation would be undesirable for both sides. Although it is true that there would be stronger support in sympathy with the Coalition if violence did take place, it is also true that the resulting polarization of the Stanford community would adversely affect this University for a number of years.

For those whose primary goal is disruption of the University, and there are such people within and outside of the Coalition, a violent ending would be desirable. For those who believe that Stanford can be a vital working community with cooperative action on all sides, a violent end would be a tragedy.

2.3 DOES THE COALITION CARRY OUT "CLASSIFIED" WORK?

One of the Coalition demands concerns classified work at AEL. They are objecting to the imposing of secrecy restriction on the work of the Systems Techniques Laboratory. In trying to interact with the Coalition people, however, one notes that the Coalition uses the same tactics that they are objecting to at AEL. In particular, they hold many secret meetings in which, despite proclamations that they are open, people are ejected when they are not "the right people". Personnel from STL have also attempted to present certain views at open meetings of the Coalition, and in all cases when prior arrangements for such activities had been made, the Coalition has turned down the request of the speaker to present his views at the open meeting. It may have been possible to force the issue by appearing at the meeting and insisting on one's freedom to speak during the meeting. In view of the delicate situation that existed during the sit-in, it was felt that this original rejection would be escalated to more violent action if the freedom to speak was demanded.

2.4 AMPLE TIME MUST BE ALLOWED FOR REACHING GOOD DECISIONS.

The sit-in was an act of coercion and the argument is made that no reasonable actions could be taken because of the necessary haste required to arrive at decisions in the face of the sit-in.

I agree that the issues are more complex and have more far-reaching implications than have been indicated by the arguments presented by the Coalition. I believe that a more thoughtful approach to the discussion, and particularly a more reasoned consideration of the pros and cons would be necessary before a good decision can be reached.

While it is true that a more reasoned and thoughtful deliberation will be necessary to arrive at a reasonable solution, the cry of "let's not do this hastily", can sometimes be just an excuse for postponing effective action. In this case, some positive action is clearly necessary. It seems that the university is taking action as rapidly as possible, slow as that may seem to the Coalition.

It may be possible that some of the decisions and feelings may change after a little introspection. It is important that the Coalition realize that this is the case and that actions have been started and are taking place on the basis of incomplete information and a lack of thought concerning future implications of the actions taken. It could be possible, therefore, for some of the decisions that have already been reached to be reversed. The Coalition must recognize that this is not just a simple putting down of the ideas that have been raised by the Coalition but it is in fact a result of the thoughtful, considered action appropriate to a university.

III. ABOUT STL

One minor point should be made clear concerning the Systems Techniques Laboratory (STL); STL is a group of people who are a part of the Stanford Electronics Laboratory (SEL). The people in STL normally inhabit the Applied Electronics Laboratory (AEL) building. There have been summaries of the work and the nature of STL published recently so I will not dwell on the subject here.

3.1 STL AND THE DEMANDS

There are several comments to be made concerning the demands raised at the AEL sit-in and the activities that are carried out in that building by the normal inhabitants.

First, there are no chemical, biological or radiological warfare activities going on in STL nor have there ever been such activities.

Second, there are no counterinsurgency activities undertaken at STL nor have there ever been any such activities.

Third, the amount of work in STL which is in direct support of the war in Viet Nam is an insignificant fraction of the activity within STL.

Fourth, the contract support for STL involves a number of classified projects at the present time, an arrangement which seemed satisfactory to the Stanford Community until the sit-in. Significant attempts were already underway on the difficult task of finding support for the lab in unclassified areas.

There are good reasons for keeping some classified work on university campuses from both a moral and academic freedom viewpoint. This subject is discussed at greater length in other sections, and is also the subject of a separate paper.

3.2 STL HAS CAREFULLY DOCUMENTED THE USEFULNESS OF ITS WORK TO THE CURRENT MILITARY SPONSORS

There have been many comments by the Coalition about the written descriptions of the work done in STL. They have emphasized the fact that these descriptions show that the work supports the Department of Defense and increases and war-making capabilities of the various services. At least in part, the description of the work that we do in terms of military problems is a necessary requisite for getting sponsorship from these agencies; it is necessary to document exactly how the work involved relates to the specific military problems in which the sponsor is interested. Most sponsors are not at all concerned as to how this work will aid research in medical areas or how it may solve social problems. Much of the work, particularly when it moves away from the applied area

and toward areas of basic research, must be scrutinized very carefully to identify what the potential applications, military or otherwise, may be from a long-range viewpoint. In some cases, it requires considerable effort to point out how basic ideas may be applied to the sponsor's problems in the future, perhaps five or even ten years away.

3.3 AN APPLIED RESEARCH PROGRAM IS VALUABLE TO STANFORD AND TO SOCIETY.

The essence of engineering is in applying the results of basic work to the particular needs of society. In a university which supports a large Engineering program, it is appropriate to have an applied electronics activity on the campus. Since the Systems Techniques Laboratory is the main group engaged in applied electronics work at Stanford, it is important that the lab continue to exist on the campus. It may be true that the lab will not require the degree of dependence on military work which now exists; however, this dependence has persisted primarily because military sources represent the largest source of funding and provide the widest range of technical problems.

It is even more important to consider the implications of an applied research program to the areas of research that have been "approved" by the Coalition, namely, environmental problems, pollution problems, medical problems and the like. Many of these areas do not yet require the highly sophisticated technology which the military is accustomed to using. Rather, there is a need for applied work utilizing the existing technology for the solution of problems in these various areas. An applied electronics program will therefore be even more appropriate in the context of these programs than it is in the area of military research. I strongly urge you to consider the implications of your actions and their potential effect on the Systems Techniques Laboratory and on the applied research program in general.

3.4 STL OPERATES IN A RELATIVELY UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT.

The Systems Techniques Laboratory has a unique position in the world of government agencies, industries and non-profit corporations, and it is, in part, this unique position which has permitted the Systems Techniques Laboratory to achieve the degree of impact that it has in the work that has been carried out so far. I think it is also true that the unique position of the Systems Techniques Laboratory can be used to advantage in the solution of many of the emerging problem areas of today, and could, in fact, contribute as much to these areas as it has to the previous military commitments. Many people in STL welcome and indeed encourage the participation of students in activities which are appropriate to the solution of these emerging problems. I feel that the applied work in the Systems Techniques Laboratory would provide an ideal way for these students to begin creative work toward the solution of these problems.

3.5 A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF STUDENTS WILL BE ADVERSELY AFFECT BY THE CLOSING OF THE STL LABORATORY

The Lab supports many students both financially and by providing research supervision for students in thesis or dissertation areas. A fact sheet has been printed which summarizes student interaction at STL and

should be consulted for more details concerning this important factor.

3.6 WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO STL?

As a member of STL, I am quite naturally concerned about the fate of both the Laboratory and the program of applied research at Stanford. Will they cease to exist or will the lab remain as a significant contributor in electronics? The answer lies partly in the actions of the university and partly in the actions of STL. The end of STL could be brought about by three causes:

1. An excessively rapid end to classified work
2. Loss of a majority of the staff
3. An unfavorable combination of several smaller factors

3.6.1 TOO RAPID AN END TO CLASSIFIED RESEARCH WOULD DESTROY STL

The first cause is currently crucial; decisions on the restriction of classified work will be made very soon. It is necessary to allow STL sufficient time to develop new ideas, new sources of support and new proposals. Even after such preliminaries are done, one is then faced with the time-consuming mechanics of proposal evaluation and contract awards by the funding agency.

Assuming that ideal conditions exist after the classifications restrictions are imposed, a period of two to three years would probably be required to effect the changeover. Less time would seriously endanger the survival of STL and the applied electronics program.

3.6.2 A MAJOR LOSS OF STAFF WOULD DESTROY STL

The second cause for the demise of STL would be the loss of a large portion of the staff. This action could result from either individual or collective offers of work by outside companies to individuals who thought Stanford was applying excessive restrictions to their work. It is certainly true that the capabilities of STL people could be used elsewhere.

It would be ironic, indeed, if the STL personnel formed a new electronic warfare company as a result of the sit-in. This course of action would almost certainly result in a substantial shift by the staff from long-term research to short-term projects more closely related to the war effort.

While it is virtually certain that some of the staff will leave, the number that choose to go will be largely determined by the nature of the restrictions imposed. Ill-conceived guidelines, that do not address the real issues but attempt to place sweeping restrictions on more easily defined areas, will cause a large number of people to go where there is more freedom of choice--outside the University.

3.6.3 A COMBINATION OF UNFAVORABLE FACTORS MAY STILL FORCE STL TO END

Many people are aware of the fact that the government priorities and

resultant funding may be wrong. It does take time to change these priorities, however. I think that industries are generally more aware of this and are trying to change their own work to realign with the new priorities. This has resulted in a great competition for funds in these emerging areas. It is a distinct possibility that the timing of the STL changeover will not allow a sufficient funding base to be built up, and, despite a substantial effort, STL may then be forced to close.

I believe that those students that are concerned about these emerging areas could aid STL in establishing this support base and at the same time contribute significantly to the solution of these important problems. I will discuss this at greater length in a later section.

IV. WHAT CAN BE DONE?

This question breaks down into two smaller questions: (1) what can be done about the national policies and priorities that underlie the dis-sentiment that caused the sit-in, and (2) what can be done on campus, particularly about STL? Regarding the first question, the basic policies that led to the sit-in can only be changed by a massive nation-wide effort. It might be more proper to then ask what local action can be taken to help change the national policies and priorities. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these actions except to suggest that the goal of student efforts could be usefully directed toward a shifting of funds from DOD to other agencies. Some attempts at answering the second question are already in progress and well known.

4.1 STUDENT SUPPORT OF STL IN EMERGING PROBLEM AREAS COULD BE VERY BENEFICIAL

As was mentioned above, an applied research program could be very helpful in solving many of the emerging problems of environment, population, and social ills. Students could be very helpful in these areas by aiding and supplementing the program of STL. I believe this aid could be very beneficial to STL, to the students involved and to the University in general.

First, this type of program would give concerned students an opportunity to do something toward solving the problems. There is an understandable frustration among young people because in addition to recognizing the problem more acutely than many of their elders, they are also less able to participate in meaningful action toward the solution of these ills. The applied research program at STL would provide an appropriate vehicle for such participation. I think it would be possible for students from many disciplines to interact with STL; the program would by no means be restricted to engineering or sciences students.

Secondly, STL would benefit by being able to draw on additional talent during the difficult period of rearrangement of classified research. Those who have already been trying to change the STL financial support base realize the difficulty of such a transition. Many of these emerging problem areas require knowledge of areas outside the experience of STL, for example, chemistry, and this would allow STL to participate in activities requiring more of an interdisciplinary approach.

Finally, the University would benefit through an increased interaction between faculty, staff and students. It has become apparent that a large portion of the University community was not aware of the significance of the STL program. An increased interaction would increase this awareness and also make STL more aware of the nature of the emerging problem areas.

4.2. A PERIODIC ENCOUNTER WOULD PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE AND LEGAL ALTERNATIVE TO A SIT IN.

The sit-in at the AEL building by the April 3 Coalition has produced a very effective and stimulating exchange of ideas on some of the most important moral questions that face our country today. It is not likely that as intensive an examination of these points would have occurred in any of the normal day-to-day activities on the campus or elsewhere.

The sit-in was, in effect, an eight-day involuntary encounter.

I would like to propose that encounters, not quite as involuntary as the sit-in, be continued on a more or less regular basis. As a practical matter there may have to be some incentive for people to attend; if one makes such an encounter too voluntary, there will not be a sufficiently broad interchange of ideas. This incentive may take the form of a specific time-off allotted to students, staff and faculty for the purpose of the discussion, or it may be set up as an officially recognized activity.

The proposed procedure would not violate any judicial procedures and would allow the application of "social pressure" on activities widely held to be immoral. There would be ample time to temper both sides by the interchange of information without threats or coercion.

4.3 SOCIAL PRESSURE AS A MEANS OF CONTROL ON UNDESIRABLE RESEARCH

Because of the difficulty of setting up legal procedures to provide curbs on the moral aspects of research, I would propose using "social pressure" as a means of controlling such "undesirable" research. It is certainly true that there will always be some number of people who are willing and perhaps even eager to work on the most reprehensible type of warfare, but it is also my feeling that a significant number of technical people could be made aware of the moral implications of their work through encounters or through other exposure to moral discussions of war-related research. If indeed these discussions are undertaken on a sufficiently wide scale, I believe it will be possible to exert a degree of social control such that large efforts on these so-called immoral systems would not be possible.

One difficulty with this approach lies in the large amount of effort required to undertake such discussions, but, by the same token the far-reaching implications of these discussions to all matters of life would make the effort worthwhile.

4.4 EDUCATION IN THE NEARBY COMMUNITY CAN BE EFFECTIVE

Since this is extremely relevant to Stanford, it is perhaps one that should be emphasized more heavily. Certainly no great body of information exists at the present time on many of the social and environmental problems which beset the country and the world today. One of the first orders of business in education is to do research to build up this body of knowledge on which the education must rest.

After a sufficient body of information has been acquired, additional mechanisms for education must be found in addition to the usual university-student relationship. The reason I suggest this is because some of us that feel that time is running out in many of these problem areas. It will be necessary to involve students in activities that bring them outside the university so that they are able to educate the general public at a faster rate than would be possible by confining this education to the universities.

Although I expect that there will be no reluctance on the part of many students to undertake an activity of this type, I do feel that it is important to identify the need for such an activity and to start a process going that would lead to this external educational process at the earliest possible date.