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Campus Clashes Raise Issues Basic to Democratic Society

THE WEEKLY deadline for this article has arrived, but this is not the most propitious time for the scholarly overview of some new point of scientific discovery or technique.

For over a week a group of Stanford undergraduates have "occupied" the Applied Electronics Laboratories with the aim of expressing their exasperation over the pace (very brisk by usual standards) of the University's response to a number of demands.

These have to do mainly with the character research at the university trustee-owned Stanford Research Institute and within some department of the university itself.

These issues are not simple ones: They go to the roots of the nature of democratic society. The same students who cry the loudest for individual freedom are the most vehement in demanding the most stringent control of the work of others in what they regard as reprehensible research. At the present moment this is military technology. Obviously this is a matter of infinite regress. Other lines of work are already attacked as insufficiently relevant to short-run human needs.

As often happens, the main thrust of these ideas is the authoritarian right and left.

THE STUDENTS have now vacated the laboratory, at least for the present. This vindicates the good judg-

ment of the more thoughtful idealists among them, as well as that of the University administration in reacting with firm but cautious restraint. A system of judicial review has been established since last year's disturbances, and there is little thought of amnesty for clear violations of the community's rules of behavior.

There is, or ought to be, a general perception that such violations cannot be made with impunity, and that the campus will become a shambles if the sit-in becomes the normal mode of expressing and attempting to resolve differences of policy.

I hope there is also the sense that an sanctions are imposed with the aims of deterrence, not vindictiveness about a demonstration whose outcome has, so far, been far less destructive than anyone could rationally have expected.

Those who demand the early use of main force to clear a campus building might be more reluctant to do this if their own children were immediately involved. They are also playing right into the hands of the militant core, the haters, those whose open aim is the destruction of contemporary society any who find the university the most available

NO ONE has yet discovered how to apply such police force without injuring more naive or innocent bystanders than core activists. The life commitment of this peripheral group is the main value at stake. The provocation of a brutal response is the radicals' main

weapon in this struggle. The Stanford situation was especially precarious because the building contained security files with classified information. How easily the militants could have permanently incriminated the other students by an escalation of their group anger to the point that any one of them began to penetrate the files. If classified material of this sensitivity is to be maintained on a university campus at all, it must be guarded well enough in the first instance to minimize its tempting role as target. This kind of intrusion of non-academic commitments into university life is, however, one of the most legitimate complaints that the students might make. Such files are, after all, an equally tempting target for violent intrusions by espionage agents.

The students are equally exercised about many other issues that they are not the first to discover, and whose proposed answers are undoubtedly oversimplified in an unrealistic and unworkable way.

Why do our national priorities remain so tragically confused? How can we, for example, retain a commitment to secret work in biological warfare research, whose secrecy itself feeds unrealistic fantasies, whose persistence encourages the proliferation of comparable efforts in other countries to the detriment of the whole world's security, and whose strategic advantages are so futile next to the nuclear deterrent?