

141 Western Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139
491-4165
December 6, 1987

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Cambridge City Council
795 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139

To the Honorable Council:

I've been reading with interest accounts of the latest MIT police action against non-violent protesters at the recent Tent City roundup. Once again MIT has demonstrated that it does not have the institutional maturity to properly be entrusted with broad police powers.

Only last year, in the Spring of 1986, MIT arrested 8 students in another unannounced early morning raid; this time on a South African divestment shantytown protest. Those arrests came suddenly, without proximate provocation, and in the context of MIT's refusal to negotiate with the protesters. Given MIT's lack of good faith in that episode (which was roundly criticized by a faculty resolution), the current fiasco should not come as too much of a surprise.

While MIT claims that the people arrested at Tent City had urged the residents to stay, this claim is contradicted by all the testimony of those arrested, who indicated a desire to help the homeless leave peaceably. It is also contradicted by the chief of the Cambridge Police, Anthony G. Paolillo. Chief Paolillo is quoted in the New York Times as stating that "[The residents] indicated to me that they'd walk if asked." and also that when he arrived at the site Friday morning, "People were packing and at some point the MIT police decided to make arrests - I have no idea why."

This is at least the second time in two years that MIT has misused its police powers and embarrassed itself (not to mention the Cambridge police force which is inevitably dragged into MIT's blunders). MIT derives its police powers from a special legislative edict and I think it's high time that the scope of that edict be reconsidered. In particular, it has become clear that MIT does not know how to deal with nonviolent political protests (much less what to make of them) and its power to arrest in such situations should be removed. As a former victim of those powers (arrested taking pictures at Shantytown, acquitted after trial), I urge you to take action in this direction.

Sincerely,


Larry Kolodney
MIT '85

CC: The Tech, The Cambridge Chronicle

Comm. from Larry Kolodney, 141 Western Ave.,
in opposition to the police powers granted to
MIT in a special legislative act and would
like to have the scope of this legislation
to be reconsidered.

In City Council,

December 21, 1987

Referred to the
City Manager and City
Solitor

copy sent to the City Manager &
City Solitor 12/23/87 m