

Consensus On SRI

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At this crisis moment in the SRI controversy, it is important to recognize that the University has arrived at a clear consensus on the future of our research affiliate.

The consensus, quite simply, is that SRI should not be sold and that certain kinds of military research should cease. Both faculty and students support this position, and it seems only a matter of time before key administrators join them.

The student body has voiced its overwhelming support for the consensus position on SRI through two referendums, several petitions, and mass demonstrations. In the recent questionnaire, no less than 68 percent of the students voted to keep SRI and reform its research policies.

The faculty, although certainly less united than the students, also favored the consensus position in the questionnaire. Fully 62 percent voted to restrict the kinds of research SRI can do. But the faculty was divided on how to achieve this goal: 35 percent said

keep SRI, while 27 percent said sell with a restrictive covenant.

The foot-dragging of the Academic Senate at least shows that they feel sale of SRI is unacceptable. And if SRI is not sold, more than two-thirds of the faculty favor some research restrictions.

President Pitzer has thus far been silent in public on SRI. But he has not been neutral on the question of military research. Pitzer played a key role in persuading the trustees to stop new CBW contracts at SRI, and he took a strong position against classified research at Stanford. Judging by these stands and his oft-expressed disgust with the Vietnam War and the Pentagon, it seems plausible that Pitzer will come down on the side of reform at SRI.

The strength of this consensus on SRI puts the Board of Trustees in an uncomfortable, or perhaps intolerable, situation. The University community is united in asking the Board to do something it doesn't want to do. A confrontation is inevitable, with the Trustees backed up against a wall.

The student body has already made

an explicit threat.

In the April 18 referendum, 58 percent of the students voting said they would "participate in a sit-in or similar means of protest" if the Trustees do not "positively respond to the desire of the Stanford community regarding research at Stanford and SRI and in resolving the future relationship between Stanford and SRI by May 14." The Trustees next meeting is May 13, in San Francisco.

Ironically, the Trustees have done much to create their own dilemma. During the past two months, the Board has made a great show of its efforts to solicit campus opinion. Faculty and student delegations have been heard, questionnaires have been distributed, and today a group of trustees will hear testimony.

The Board has done all these things because it wants to ease campus frustration and prevent sit-ins. But the stragem has a serious flaw: When people are continually asked for their opinion, they soon come to expect that their opinion will be heeded.