

July 24, 1951.

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 3, 1949

Recent reports in the public press regarding the activities of Dirk J. Struik, Professor of Mathematics at M.I.T., call for a statement of the Institute's attitude toward Communism and toward freedom of inquiry.

The Institute is unequivocally opposed to Communism; it is also sternly opposed to the Communistic method of dictating to scholars the opinions they must have and the doctrines they must teach. M.I.T. seeks first a faculty and staff of thoroughly competent scholars and teachers of high integrity. Assuming this competence and integrity, it believes that its faculty, as long as its members abide by the law, and maintain the dignity and responsibilities of their position, must be free to inquire, to challenge, and to doubt in their search for what is true and good. They must be free to examine controversial matters, to reach conclusions of their own, to criticize and be criticized. Only through such unqualified freedom of thought and investigation can an educational institution, especially one dealing with science, perform its function of seeking truth.

The Institute's attitude toward the charges which have been made against Professor Struik must be viewed against this background and in the light of these considerations. Professor Struik is an American citizen. As required in Massachusetts, he has taken the "teacher's oath" to support the constitutions of the United States and of the Commonwealth. He has only by implication been charged with illegal actions, and he staunchly denies that he has at any time committed acts that are improper for a

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loyal American citizen. The Institute has secured a transcript of Mr. Philbrick's testimony in New York and finds no statement in it charging Professor Struik with an unlawful act. He has also discharged competently and faithfully his duties as a professor of Mathematics. Careful investigation by the Institute has revealed no evidence which would indicate that he has sought to indoctrinate at the Institute his beliefs in regard to Marxism or improperly to influence students or colleagues.

The Institute believes that Professor Struik, who denies that he has committed any crime, should be considered innocent of any criminal action unless he is proved guilty. The Institute feels that if criminal charges are to be brought against Professor Struik, they should be brought by the government and handled in orderly fashion by the courts. An educational institution has no competence to carry on a trial to determine whether a law has been broken.

Should a member of our staff be indicted for advocating the violent overthrow of the American government or other criminal acts, or if the evidence of such actions were incontrovertible, immediate action would be taken which would protect the Institute and at the same time preserve his rights. If this staff member should be convicted of this charge, he would be discharged.

The Institute also wishes to make it clear that it believes that the teacher, as a teacher, must be free of doctrinaire control originating outside of his own mind. He must be free to be critical and objective in his own way, and above all he must work in the clear daylight without hidden allegiances or obligations which require him to distort his research or teaching in accord with dictates from without. If a teacher were found to be subject to improper outside control in his teaching, the Institute would regard him as incompetent.

The Institute believes that one of the greatest dangers of the present cold war and of the present fear of Communism is the

danger that they will cause America to relinquish or distort or weaken basic civil rights. This may be a greater danger than the occasional impact or influence of a Communist.

No American college or university has a more impressive record than M.I.T. of devotion to our national welfare or of wholehearted support of the ideals of American democracy. It has been the training ground for thousands of alumni who serve and strengthen our system of free enterprise and who vigorously uphold the principles of our free society. Its faculty serves the community, the state, and the nation in a spirit of complete dedication to the public service. I need only cite the Institute's war record and the major contributions it made through research and training to the national cause.

I believe it is equally true that it would be hard to find an educational institution in which the students are so unanimously devoted to American ideals. They are too critical and independent to be easy marks for any special pleaders. The overwhelming majority of our students are so thoroughly imbued with their democratic heritage and with their responsibilities and privileges as American citizens that there is no danger of their being corrupted.

The Institute proposes to deal with all charges of Communism or other ideologies in the light of these considerations and convictions.

J. R. KILLIAN, JR.

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From the News Service
Mass. Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Mass.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Dr. Karl T. Compton, Chairman of the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in the absence of Dr. James R. Killian, President of the Institute, issued the following statement today. A copy of Dr. Killian's original statement of 1949 is attached.

John J. Rowlands
Director of News Service

The Institute has been deeply concerned over this situation and welcomes any investigation that will determine the facts. The Institute's stand in the Struik case, made clear in a statement from Dr. James R. Killian, its president, in May 1949, still represents its attitude in such cases. Any further comment while the present investigation is in progress would, in our opinion, be improper.