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Skirting the issue

The 11 students who were arrested Friday occupied Room 305 in the Whitmore Administration Building out of frustration. They had been trying for three weeks to get administrators to talk about Central Intelligence Agency recruitment at the University.

The students were forced to occupy the room by administrators who refused to justify allowing the agency — with an at best questionable record of human rights violations and illegal activities — to recruit on campus. These administrators are paid out of the pockets of students, but they often refuse to answer to their most important constituency.

The students decided to stay in the room after it was made clear that Chancellor Joseph D. Duffey did not consider their concern worth his time. Also rejected was an offer to talk from Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Dennis Madson when he insisted on meeting with only three of the students.

By framing the issue in a press release as one only of "the right of ... students to pursue careers of their choosing," Duffey and Madson have skirted the issue. Since students feel strongly enough about the issue to get arrested, Duffey and Madson owe students an explanation as to where they stand on CIA activities.

In the last analysis, the CIA should be allowed to recruit on campus; to bar it would set a dangerous precedent. But neither should people be barred from exposing the CIA for what it is, or protesting its activities in the only locally accessible forum.

On Thursday, protestors went too far in denying people their right to attend an information session by forcing its cancellation, but Friday's demonstration did not clearly call for the action the administration took — arresting the protestors rather than discuss University recruitment policies. Although the demonstrators may have been "disturbing the peace," confrontation could have been avoided had the administration been open to discussion.

While protestors should learn to protest without obstructing, administrators should learn to work with students regarding policies that affect us all.

Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the Collegian Board of Editors.

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