

# CIA hardly a non-issue

One of my reactionary friends informed me the other day that by now the CIA is a moot issue on the UMass campus. "The CIA's not recruiting here now," she reasoned, "so what's the issue?"

## Timothy Harris

Speaking strictly for myself, I would argue that recruiting isn't really the issue. The point is that the CIA operates above the law, is unaccountable to the American people, and will continue as such whether it recruits from UMass or not. But moreover, the point is that this doesn't mean we are powerless.

To think globally and act locally; that is the point. For us to make a pilgrimage to CIA headquarters would be rather impractical. I suppose that if we did we would spend an evening or two in their fine jails, receive our fines, and finally return home more tired, more poor, and possibly more discouraged. It would be another protest in a city that couldn't care less.

No thanks. Much better to focus on UMass' own institutional support of this outlaw organization. We should not forget that UMass is a state university. Joseph Duffey thinks this means we should show "civility" toward murderers. I think this is evidence that Duffey is paid with a government check.

As American citizens and as members of this institution we have an obligation to act; when we can and as we can. The university is where we live and work. It is also where the issue of the CIA enters into our own lives. This is not something abstract and a thousand miles away. It is right here and now.

We are part of a movement. The

divestiture movement began on the campuses as well. Students took responsibility for the actions of the institutions they were part of, and what's more, it mattered. The anti-CIA movement matters too, and our responsibility is just as great.

Disruption gets things done. It makes people pay attention. It is true that we may write letters petitioning our "representatives" in government, and we should. Some however prefer more direct alternatives. Students occupying buildings are much harder to ignore.

There are several problems to the argument that the CIA should be allowed to recruit on campus "just like any other organization." The first is glaringly obvious. The CIA is not "just any other organization." Its illegal activities are well known and documented. By allowing their presence we implicitly condone their crimes. By protesting the CIA we call its legitimacy into question. Legitimacy is the issue; not recruitment.

The "just like any other organization" argument frames the issue as one of free speech. We are to be so pluralistic, democratic and nonjudgmental as to forfeit our ability to distinguish right from wrong. When we do this, others make decisions for us. In the absence of opposition there is acceptance.

Stopping CIA recruitment at UMass will not stop the CIA. They are a resourceful bunch that will somehow get by. The issue of recruiting is only a means to localize the larger issue of the CIA itself. Protesting their presence on campus is how we may take responsibility; and if we don't, who will?

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