Jan. 21,1986

"WHY ARE YOU HERE?"

From time to time, employees of Draper have asked us: " Why are you here?". This open letter is an effort to answer that question as honestly as possible. Our reasons are both pragmatic and spiritual.

We find that when we are most in touch with reality, we are acutely conscious of the ever increasing danger of nuclear war. As the number and explosive power of nuclear warheads increases, as reaction time is more and more reduced and as deployment is more and more widespread, it is our conviction that the probability of their use, either by accident or design, increases. Since even a single Trident I missile has an explosive power (100 kilotons) eight times greater than the Hiroshima bomb, the use of even a few of these missiles would end human civilization as we know it. A more extensive exchange could produce a nuclear winter and exterminate planetary life itself. It is our conviction that under certain circumstances,our government is planning to use these weapons. This leads us to the conclusion that the possession of more and more of these weapons increases the danger of their use and makes our world less safe.

It is our experience that this reality all too easily slips from our consciousness. Our daily concerns and activities allow it to be pushed into the background. So we come to Draper each week in order to remember what we and you --and all of us together -- are actually planning to do.

"WHY NOT SOMEPLACE ELSE?"

We know that the employees of Draper do not actually build missiles nor do they determine policies that create the funds for these weapons. However, Draper is an essential part of a complex system that utilizes the cooperation of the scientific, educational, industrial and military establishments. In July,1984 the Boston Globe listed both MIT and Draper among the top 10 defense contractors in Mass.. In November,1985 the Globe announced that Draper had been awarded a $21m contract from the Navy to work on Trident missile.

It is clear that some of you do the hightly sophisticated research in guidance systems that make the MX,Trident I and Trident II missiles accurate enough to be use as first-strike weapons. The fact that the military expects to be able to land the Trident II missile within 600 feet of its target is made possible by the work of the employees at Draper. Since