Dean Brown Describes Proposed Changes In Curriculum and Teaching Methods

Surely one hundred persons were in Kreege Auditorium this Wednesday afternoon to hear Dean of Engineering Gordon R. Brown speak on "The Impact of the Fluid Grant on MIT." Brown opened the presentation in the usual way, and what accomplishments were presently anticipated. He stressed that no specific developments had been fully approved by any faculty committee, and that what he mentioned were only possibilities presently under discussion.

Brown began his talk by stating that an easily obtained job was not worth coming to MIT for, and would not make much difference in society. He said that he was only speaking "at night," and that "maintenance men should not come to MIT." The type of engineer that should come from MIT, he said, was a "compromise" who could creatively employ his technical ideas, who could design a standard device, but who had the possibility for a totally new device for doing the same job.

"We Must Question Whether The Organization Is Adequate"

Many curricula are too compartmentalized in current institutions to allow such an engineer, according to Brown. He felt that courses should be more broadly and deeply based in science, that there should be "compartamentalization," and that it should be possible to cross from one field to another. He added that this sort of thinking was brought to the Ford Foundation's attention, and the existence of certain particularly difficult problems may be understood as a material subject based on thermodynamics, statistical mechanics, and kinetic theory.

**Courses X Revision**

Some people in the Department of Chemical Engineering have suggested changing the emphasis of the courses from a dry, text-book method of instruction to a more kinematic or process-control concept. This might make much impact on society. He said that when a student can see the apparatus, listen to the jargon, and especially come in as a student of engineering to work on experimental problems, he comes to realize the existence of certain particularly difficult problems may be understood as a material subject based on thermodynamics, statistical mechanics, and kinetic theory.

New Teaching Methods

Brown also discussed possible new teaching methods. He mentioned closed-circuit TV and movies. A movie file would be available for "pay as you go" viewing. It was his belief that free subject for film presentation is completely independent of the textbook narrative and should be as familiar to students as using a slide rule.

Another innovation being considered is a tutorial system of instruction in some subjects. Brown feels that it should not be too difficult to couple the undergraduates with an "active life of learning in research," and that only scheduling and organization present problems. In connection with this, there may be a re-evaluation of the purpose and definition of contact hours. $1.5 million has been set aside in recent budget estimates and new educational laboratories.

Changes in Cam Beowy

All these changes, if they materialize, must be the result of the leadership of Dean Brown. He closed by saying that the program will initially "jump into the air" and then "settle down to a horizontal plane," but that it will bring new people, new space, and will certainly result in "engineering" and "understanding" on the part of the student body.

Dean Brown also commented that he would very much like to meet with the students at some later date, once plans and programs have become more definite.