Housing Initiative

The Institute is certainly to be highly commended for the initiative and community concern it exhibited in the housing program that was announced Wednesday. The 1600 units (up to 750 of which would be subsidized units for the poor and elderly) planned for five Cambridge sites represent a commitment of far greater magnitude than any plan the city has seen in recent years. The on-campus program, aimed at eventually housing up to 650 more students, is another well-intentioned effort to ease the critical housing shortage in the city.

The emotion-charged issues of the Cambridge housing crisis, which has been in the forefront of community news since the city-wide housing conference last September, have become matters of increasing interest and concern for many students. One of the interesting features of MIT's program will be the possible opportunities (yet to be defined) for student involvement in such crucial areas as winning neighborhood support for the plan.

Yet, Wednesday's announcement represents only the beginning of a long and arduous road that must be made before the full potential of the program reaches fruition. As Dr. Kllian noted, "MIT has secured the sites and can provide technical assistance, but this program cannot succeed unless all elements join together in a unified effort."

Perhaps the ultimate significance of the program will be its role as a major testing ground to determine whether Cambridge, with its seemingly indifferent City Council, its plethora of city agencies that function without a viable sense of coordination, and its proliferation of diverse, often misguided, citizen groups, can be maturely united in a concerted effort to bring about more housing for its needy citizens.

Among the several reasons why City Council has seemed to be an unimaginative, unconcerned, "Tower of Babel" during the height of confrontations of recent months, probably the most fundamental is the conciliatory and objective analysis offered by Councilman Daniel Hayes: "Everyone wants low-cost housing, but not in their own backyards."

Due, partly, to Cambridge's proportional representation method of government, some of the councilmen have tried to dictate the policies and functions of the city as a whole in favor of the cries of the people in particular neighborhoods who fear the consequences of any new housing or renewal in general--in their area. Neighborhood approval will be a critical factor in the ultimate fate of the Institute's plans.

Back in October, the Institute's official policy was that it was willing to work under the leadership of the city government to cope with the housing situation. Yet, with the possible exception of the new City Manager and the newly formed housing task force, it has been apparent that the city government lacks anyone who would place the welfare of the city above political considerations, and be the prime mover in a determined effort to seek new housing. Recognizing this fact, the community can indeed be thankful that the Institute was willing to assume a similar financial outlay in order to undertake this act of major initiative.

In addition to city-wide coordination and cooperation, another major factor in the program's chances for success will be the availability of federal and state assistance. Federal housing programs have offered extravagant promises, but have too often been inadequately funded. Thus, the program will hang, to a large degree, on the decisions of the men who are charged with setting national priorities.

In a very real sense, the question of national priorities is reflected in the current housing crisis here in Cambridge. The poor and elderly see themselves being cruelly victimized, in the form of a brutal rent spiral which has reached unbelievable proportions in the past year, by university expansion, the NASA Center, and the rumormented invasion of additional defense-oriented industries. Many of the needy see themselves as being driven out of the city by these high-income interests that are transforming Cambridge into "the Pentagon of New England."

In the face of indignant incriminations from citizen groups, MIT's Administration last week held a high step towards demonstrating that this pledge was not just one of idle talk.

In our belief that economic discrimination is just as unjust as racial discrimination, and that universities can and should seek to play a major role in transforming our cities into communities of harmony rather than discord, we believe MIT's program to be a very good start for the new government. Those who suggest that it was disastrous to proceed before the Council, that MIT's program frustrated. As Dr. Kllian noted, "MIT has secured the sites and can provide technical assistance, but this program cannot succeed unless all elements join together in a unified effort."

A Promising Start

Tuesday night's General Assembly meeting proved to be a very good start for the new government. Those who suggest that it was disorganized or ineffective should compare its activities with those of the late, unlamented Inscommr. procedures in order to reach decisions. Toward this end, the atmosphere was more pleasurable than in the past. The new City Manager and the newly formed housing task force, it has been apparent that the city government lacks anyone who would place the welfare of the city above political considerations, and be the prime mover in a determined effort to seek new housing. Recognizing this fact, the community can indeed be thankful that the Institute was willing to assume a similar financial outlay in order to undertake this act of major initiative.

There will probably come a time when it will not be possible for the Assembly to operate by the "consensus" procedure it used Tuesday. In that instance, it may have to fall back on mechanical procedures in order to reach decisions. Toward this end, we would be wise to settle the question of aigit-large membership as soon as possible.

We feel that it is unreasonable to expect the Assembly to operate perfectly the first time around. We do anticipate it becoming more effective as time goes on. The spirit of frank dialogue and respect for everyone's opinion which prevailed Tuesday night leads us to believe that it will be.

Letters to the Tech

To the Editor:

In reply to Steve Loeb's letter of March 27:

It seems to me that the Student Center was intended to be a building devoted to the social and recreational activities of students. It is, as far as I know, the building is wonderfully inadequate. Aside from the all-night library, which is an excellent idea, the Student Center is merely a place of business. One goes there to the Copy or the pool room, or theatre Center, or the office area, does his business, and leaves promptly. The activities, aside from courses, used only for study or playing a previous image.

I am well aware of the space needs of activities. But I feel that the needs of the Center must be a whole should not be subordinated to that minority in the expanding activities. If it seems that the space problems are a problem of concern, activities offices should be moved out of the Student Center entirely.

All of this boils down to the original design of the Student Center. Very little can be done about it now, but I think a complaint should be registered here. The basement is filled with useful services, but there is not enough available space. The Copy occupies the entire first floor. The student services, which consists of everything else, is ready in the basement. There is no room for the entire Student Center. Very little can be done about it now, but I think a complaint should be registered here. The basement is filled with useful services, but there is not enough available space. The Copy occupies the entire first floor. The student services, which consists of everything else, is ready in the basement. There is no room for the entire Student Center.

A second-class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts. The Tech is published every Friday by the Student Association, MIT, Room W20-483, MIT Student Center, 84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139. Telephone: Area Code 617, 876-5855, or 864-5534, extension 2731. United States Mail subscription rates: $4.25 for one year (46 issues), $2.00 for two years. Second-class mail postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts, and at additional mailing offices. Second-class postage permit No. 459. This is published every Friday by the Student Association, MIT, Room W20-483, MIT Student Center, 84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139. Telephone: Area Code 617, 876-5855, or 864-5534, extension 2731. United States Mail subscription rates: $4.25 for one year (46 issues), $2.00 for two years. Second-class postage permit No. 459.