ESG encourages "self-directed study"

by Alex Makowski

"We think all freshman subjects should be taught on a seminar basis," began Professor George Valley in a recent discussion of his Experimental Studies Group.

Designed to accommodate about thirty freshmen volunteers, the new program will permit freshmen to proceed at their own rate in subject areas of their own choosing. Small-size classes will be directed by the two dozen professors and upperclassmen working in ESG.

Although generally conceived as a project meant only for freshmen, the possibilities for extension into the sophomore year have not been ignored. In January the students and staff will decide whether toppling for continuation of ESG as a sophomore program.

Educational Alternative

This project was originally created as an alternative to the regular MIT educational process. Having spent several years as Undergraduates Planning Professor, Valley was well aware of the limitations of the lecture-recitation format. His in-depth study of the freshman core subjects convinced him that a large amount of effort was "ineffective." His solution was a program of self-directed study.

But there are risks. Conceived as a project of "independent study," ESG freshmen could set back their MIT education. Poorly motivated or misdirected effort could result in the waste of a term. The ad- vantages of the program are that, for those students who do choose to participate, the necessity for everyone to be on a strict schedule is removed. In fact, the students have given Valley the choice of being called "George" or "Uncle George." (He picked "George.")

"Self-directed process, his familiarity is a boon to the advisor system. After a few weeks, students will pick one of the professors as their official faculty advisor. They will then select from the ESG staff for help. The system is flexible. "You can't separate teaching from advising if advising is to work."

ESG History

The program was developed in response to a request by President Johnson in 1967. Valley drew up a proposal for a project directed to the undergraduate computer science center.

"Uncle George" (continued from page 4)

...Weekly staffing included the cubicle and a fifty-page report to Johnson. The program was developed by students and professors and a slightly larger number of students to lay the groundwork for the venture. The spring of 1968 saw the gathering of ten freshmen and a number of students to lay the groundwork for the experiment. They presented a fifty-page report to Johnson this January.

Hoping for the President's approval, the group turned to the faculty for force on educational innovation, chaired by professors Edgar Schnit and others. ESG gave George a go-ahead late last spring.

A group that counted as a professor Edward Land supports the experiment.

Physical Plant

The final organizational details were concluded this summer. Valley was given the sixth floor of building 26, and the area was redesigned to give physical emphasis of the ESG educational ideas. Two or three small rooms, a project room, and two large discussion areas share the floor with a yet-to-be-named computer.

Worthy of emphasis in the observation that here are no sleeping facilities. Though the rooms will be open to ESG freshmen all night, they are expected to live, and interact with the other 96 percent of their class. Normal participation in extracurricular activities and athletics should eliminate any feeling of isolation from MIT.

Besides these physical preparations, professors are in the plans for informing and interesting the incoming freshmen. Those responsibilities a preliminary questionnaire were sent a pamphlet describing the philosophy, advantages, and dangers of the new program.

Revolution vs. reaction—
an inescapable choice

McGovern said we should keep a sense of history: Revolution means blood. I don't want one. And yet, if George McGovern is a liberal, I have to recognize his choice. I have to choose between the two Redmen. I just don't want to make: with the middlemen.

Of course, this could all be idle speculation. Maybe it can't happen here. But one remembers the beginning of the sixties, and the hope and the possibility. One remembers the Hippies and the summer of love. But JFK is dead, and RFK, and Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King and 40,000 American soldiers and God knows how many Viet- namese and Haitians and non-violence and a certain spirit of brotherly love, even for your enemy.

It's all dead. My friends who have been in Vietnam are frustrated, tired—I'm down; some have given up hope and moved on to other causes. This is fanaticism.

The talk is of guns and the bullets are flying already.

Scared? I'm scared. I'm scared. The revolution or the brown shirt is right back? Can liberalism be revived, made viable, democratic, non-violent and effective?

Or will I be seeing my travel agent or the New York Times? Or will I be seeing my travel agent or the New York Times?