The Presidency

President Howard Johnson's plans to move to the post of MIT Corporation Chairman have provoked a spate of arguments over how well he did, who his successor should be, and how this next leader should be chosen.

There are certainly important issues, but too much of the current debate ignores a crucial question: how should the office itself be structured? Only after carefully defining the responsibilities of MIT's chief executive can we properly select Johnson's replacement.

What are the duties of a President? Clearly, he must provide effective leadership for the faculty and represent their interests within the Corporation Executive Committee. He should set general goals and trends for both long-range planning and educational policy. He should be visibly open to students — capable of achieving a divergence of interests, between Johnson and the faculty.

Tying all these together is the decision-making role, a job that outstrips anything of the above in its complexity and demands. Managing MIT's day-to-day affairs would tax to the limit the abilities of a seasoned corporate executive, let alone a campus president. As the Institute has grown enormously over the past 20 years, so has the work of keeping all of its interdependent segments functioning together.

Presidential Selection

Letters to The Tech

To the Editor:

Mr. Eddleman, in his recent letter to The Tech (September 15), proposes a rather elaborate scheme for choosing a President which reflects, I believe, a very different conception of the Institute from that championed by its founders and those who have devoted themselves to MIT over the decades.

MIT is not a "community of scholars" in the sense that Harvard proclaims itself to be. It is an institution, chartered by the State of Massachusetts, for the purpose of instituting and maintaining a society of arts, a museum of arts, and a school of industrial science, and aiding generally, by instruction, by investigation, by advancement, development, and practical application of science in conjunction with arts, agriculture, manufactures, and commerce.

The Institute and its titular head, the President, are not accountable simply to the President but also to the Future; not to the present faculty, students, and staff, but to the larger society outside the Institute community. We are not a public body, but a community come together to elect our leadership. We are participants in an enterprise chartered by William Barton Rogers and the State of Massachusetts to accomplish certain objectives for the society. The function of the Corporation is to provide that disinterested perspective of the larger society, which those within an institution cannot possess.

I strongly concur with the argument that, despite recent trends to the contrary, the Corporation seems, from the outside at least, to represent a rather narrow fraction of that larger society. But this failing should be remedied by changes in the composition of the Corporation, not by its abandonment as a vehicle for outside judgment.

With respect to the newly formed Corporation Committee on the Presidency, I can only suggest that Mr. Eddleman accompany points by the men behind the names, Dr. Stratton's Science and the Educated Man is read, (Please turn to page 4)

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