Sheridan elaborates discipline process
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though they are out-numbered by the faculty and it has not had a student chairman. Sheridan was chosen by the Faculty Committee on Nominations. He has been on the committee one year. He has no voting powers (as chairman) over the rest of the committee.

The Tech: In a case in which a student was to be tried both by the Dispute Committee and a civil court, how would the committee look upon the decision of the civil court?

Sheridan: That happened last year. It's in our procedures not to have a hearing for a student when that student has a case pending against him in a civil court, because what we do might prejudice the civil court's hearing. Of course, however, if there is a previous civil case, it appears possible that the ruling could prejudice the MIT disciplinary hearing. All I can say is that we think it is probably better to avoid prejudicing the civil case by postponing the MIT hearing, than doing it the other way around.

Double jeopardy A second problem which came up last year was the question of double jeopardy. People were tried in civil court on trespass charges. They were then tried within MIT for being present without right in the President's office and for disrupting Institute functions. Those charges appeared as slightly different charges, but were not really. It was more or less the same offense. But the main point is that this is in no way double jeopardy as a lawyer would view double jeopardy. Consider the analogy to a child getting in trouble with the police and then coming home and getting scolded by his mother. Should the mother not scold the child because he's already (been scolded been scolded) by the police? That's the question that was raised last year.

The Tech: Are there any questions that have been prevalent around the Institute concerning the disciplinary process that you think should be clarified and that you could answer now?

Sheridan: I guess one of the things that the committee has tried to emphasize is that it is not trying to be a court of law in the full formal sense, and that the closer we get to full, formal court procedure, the more we're going to lose in the precious ability to communicate with each other; this is something we're trying to hang on to. Once the faculty and the students of a university can't communicate, you're really in trouble. Some students would claim that we can't communicate even now. They may perceive it that way. But I think most people don't. I think that for the most part we're still a functioning community and we want to keep it that way.

The most difficult problem, I think, is the students' frustration with not being able to do anything about what they think of as war crimes, or MIT's involvement with the military-industrial complex, a concern, incidentally, with which I personally am in sympathy. But the problem is much more complicated than being or not being free to go into a rage and break down the door of the president's office. That doesn't help. My concern is that dissenters find realistic and effective ways to act. That's our problem. I think some students and some faculty see the problem in far too simplistic terms. We have a lot more communicating to do to understand the subtleties. I think we can communicate, with passion by the way, and I'm not saying we should let these problems drag on and on, because that doesn't help anyone. Activities for example, such as working for a new Congress, are the types of efforts that speak much more directly to the problems that the students as well as many faculty and staff are concerned about. Of course, I'm giving you my personal opinion. Rage towards the president or the Disciplinary Committee is an infantile response to a frustration which itself is real and justified, but that doesn't make that form of response very useful or effective.

Effective action I guess I'm saying it if the students want to bring power to bear on things that are...

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