Analyzing GA balance sheet

**By Alex Makowski**

Tuesday night the General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a motion sanctioning a study of student power and responsibilities. Some provisions of its findings will be overshadowed by the MIT Commission on the student role in Institute governance.

The study should be more influential where it deals with the economics of political action. The current constitution, the last major student_org design update, was approved eighteen months ago; a review now of the plan’s accomplishments would be useful. Perhaps a such a summary would help define the Assembly’s against its detractors.

### Basic needs

Any student group should meet two basic needs. First, their must always be available a forum for and a review of student opinion on such issues as do_not_affect the entire student body. (This column on mechanics can agenda: what are the constitutions?; does this opinion have final authority or does it merely entertain at the university?) Co-ordinating the activities of various student groups should be the other major concern.

Two important alternatives to the current structure have been on the table for roughly three years. Before the General Assembly was established, the Institute Organizing Committee had a government pyramid. Inscomm included such figures as Mike Roberts and Jack Aronson. These included such figures as , junior class presidents, the IFC chairmen, and an unavoidable evil. Of course, students dissatisfied with the Assembly or its conclusions as the opinions of the MIT student body, while TANG provided only for those students present at meetings. Reformers would offer the ideal solution. Such frequent polls would be impractical. The TANG provides a reasonable balance between referenda and the other proposals.

### Disaffection

Why, then, are so many students opposed to the General Assembly? Some complain that the meetings are dull, boring, and that they are not interested in what is being discussed. In a sense, this is true. Many students have argued that the GA’s claim to represent student interests is far too weak. As a result, affected students could easily elect a new, more responsive delegate, but often even such minimal interest is lacking. Most students are truly apathetic.

The GA is, as it now operates, combines the better features of the two alternatives. A more formal structure (the Executive Committee) exists for co-ordinating the various activities of the Assembly and delegates in order to prevent the waste on irrelevant projects.

The GA’s advantages are even more markedly clear when one comes to representing student opinion. Inscomm was far too staffed to represent its conclusions as the opinions of the MIT student body, while TANG provided only for those students present at meetings. Reformers would offer the ideal solution. Such frequent polls would be impractical. The TANG provides a reasonable balance between referenda and the other proposals.

### Identity crisis at MIT

**By Harold Federow**

MIT is a strange institution. Many people say they hate it, but they come. There is an old joke that MIT students never graduate, they just change status. The reason for this is the sheer volume of students. There have been many people with other plans, such as psychiatrists who have been heavily involved with the problems of MIT students. But they can only treat the symptoms, the underlying cause is far more difficult.

The other alternative was suggested by a New Government movement; TANG recommended a “town meeting” arrangement. Its leaders argued that the General Assembly’s structure has become too rigid and that a more open, democratic style is needed. The new group would bring the GA’s rate on satisfying the needs of various student groups.

One is reform, the other is revolution. This is hardly the appropriate way to reform. Punishment (or discipline) involves the infliction of suffering, pain, or loss, the very opposite of an appeal to reason or conscience. It must thus have the very opposite effect. Punishment imposes on someone for doing what he or she believes to be morally right must, as we can easily see, not only undermine the defendant’s place, harden his heart, but also subordinated to questions of responsibility. MIT’s Commission on the student role in Institute governance.

### Letters to The Tech

**To the Editor:**

The reduction of five pinball machines to three in the Student Center was done without the knowledge of the Student Center Committee. We do not believe that we can restore the five old balls as soon as possible.

Howard Jay Siegel

**To the Editor:**

This letter criticizes the proposal to set up the machinery to determine faculty members presented to the faculty at its meeting of October 21, 1976, by the Staff-Administration Committee. It does not criticize or question the various provisions of the proposal. It is not concerned with matters of justice. It is rather concerned with the matter of justification. The question it raises is how we can morally justify such a proposal. This is the logically prior question, writing this letter because, so far, this question of moral justification has never been discussed in our community.

This criticism presupposes that the faculty members who may appear before a disciplinary body act from altruistic motives with a reasonable degree of forethought. I am not concerned here with individuals who make their decisions on motives that others have dashed off without much thought. I am not myself sure how the university ought to respond to someone who stuffed stamps from his or her department to the University’s expense. If there is a good reason for not turning the culprit over to the civil authorities. But in the political case at hand I think it is reasonable to assume that the people under consideration and others who may act in the same way intended to do good. Indeed, I know of no one who has seriously questioned the fact that campus political protesters put self-interest (occupational interest at least) second to what they understand to be their moral duty.

My question is whether moral justification can a university, which is concerned to the ideals of rationality and humanism, have for an act done from altruistic reasons? Two answers are usually offered. One is reform, the other is revolution. There are, of course, other possible replies, such as vengeance, revenge, etc. But these are beyond the scope of consideration.

Reformists’ answer says that punishment is not only the guarantee of the guilty person, because we can easily see that punishment is not enough. It may even be self-defeating.

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