...where to find it (home)

By Lee Gigature

An informal survey conducted last February pointed up the fact that no MIT living group had organized any activities for the Independent Activities Period with there was a large group of students among their members that the period, with its reduced pressures, had been beneficial in fostering group interaction. Again this year, it appears no living group has in mind to attempt an extensive extracurricular act during the January period, in contrast to the wide range of "educational reform" activities proposed by Institute department and offices.

This means that this again year, "educational" innovation and experimentation during the January period will be limited to attempts at altering education within an academic context, while what is perhaps more important aspect, personal interactions in everyday living situations, is being overlooked. The MIT Commission, in its broad report, touched upon the issue of the environment and the growth of the well-educated man, but its work in this area was vague, offering no concrete suggestions. The Student Commission on Educational Policy prepared a more comprehensive study on the subject of personal relations within living groups, and presented its work to the Rogers Task Force on Education.

It seems that Panel's recommendations, however, will neglect the topic, concentrating instead on the more approachable problem of the formal curricula.

In all this excitement to reform "education," however, the most important condition that students' personal relationships day-to-day interactions, has been largely ignored. In spite of what the "innovators" may wish to believe, most of a student's growth takes place through his relationship with other people, and in spite of what they may wish, most of these relationships are developed outside the formal curricula.

Given these propositions, it follows that the real focus of educational innovation must be on the development of personal relationships and personal growth. By sponsoring activities as a group, and by fostering attitudes which lead to personal growth, the IAP, in effect an "educational innovator," offers the best hope for improving the living environment at MIT.

MIT, as an institution, possesses certain resources that can be put to work to improve the situation. The psychiatric and counseling staffs have worked in psychology and understanding of the problems of growth. The faculty in general could provide a pool of understanding individuals from which a student could drawing on the richness of individual support. (Perhaps the Corporation and even the general Cambridge-Boston community could be involved.) And these resources must be used up.

In addition there are "outside" resources that can be brought to bear on the problems of growth. Psychologist and counselors such as Living and Erickson have added to the popular literature of psychology and are particularly important for working with college students. The entire field of developmental psychology offers "objective" information on dealing with the problem of growth.

Living groups themselves constitute a resource for personal development and growth. By sponsoring activities as a group, and by fostering attitudes which lead to personal growth, the IAP can have a unique role in the development of personal relationships and personal growth. By sponsoring activities as a group, and by fostering attitudes which lead to personal growth, the IAP, in effect an educational innovator, can be used to improve the situation. The psychiatric and counseling staffs have worked in psychology and understanding of the problems of growth. The faculty in general could provide a pool of understanding individuals from which a student could drawing on the richness of individual support. (Perhaps the Corporation and even the general Cambridge-Boston community could be involved.) And these resources must be used up.

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