By Lee Giguere

To the casual observer, the nature of faculty meetings at MIT has changed drastically within the last two years. In the academic year 1969-70, meetings were much more routine, and there was little evidence of any innovation. But since the spring of '71, there has been a downpour in the attendance as well as a decrease in the intensity of discussion. There are a few reasons for this:

The immediate reaction of this student, brought into the Institute in a year of tremendous communization, was that the faculty seemed more interested in political issues than in guiding the educational policy of MIT. Moratorium, divestment, and militant radical dissent all elicited a much more intense response than the report of the MIT Commission or even the more concrete and debatable proposals of the Special Task Force on Education headed by Professor of Mathematics Hartley Rogers. It sometimes seemed as though the faculty was repudiating its collective responsibility for education.

Yet the powers of the faculty in the field of education are vast: it alone can decide on curricula and promote or denounce any appointees, and it is the faculty, acting collectively, that grants degrees, not the administration or the Corporation. If a student begins his undergraduate, observing the apparent structure of the faculty, in this large majority of the faculty in their first-year attendance of this year by more than 15% of the student body, can hardly avoid feeling short-charged.

At the same time, it is just as easy to overlook the voidishness of such a faculty conducting business. Discussion is often more important than decision. Even with only 15% (about 100) faculty members in attendance, it is impossible for anyone to have his say. At this time, the diversity among those who do speak often reduces the discussion to a simple survey of virtual opinions on particular elements. Either the discussion seems ongoing, or no discussion seems ongoing. Does this mean that individual faculty members are too involved in their day-to-day teaching to be inclined to step back and consider the long-range effectiveness of their work? While personal experience of the many faculty members with educational innovation going on at MIT to allow the assertion to stand. New andarto the world within the bounds of the traditional departmental structure, believe that the reason for this is that MIT is not considering long term educational issues.

An explanation

Professor Rogers, faculty chairman, offered several ideas in explaining the dichotomy in behavior that seems to mark the last few years.

Regarding the importance of the faculty role and its responsibility for education, noted that while interest is widespread, faculty members tend to be conservative of their time. Issues, he explained, are generally resolved before they are brought to the faculty as a whole.

With this in mind, is that the system works slowly: every proposal must be examined by several different groups, some within the departments and some, such as CEP, having a broader base of consideration. Such issues, he pointed out, are discussed on a one-to-one level rather than in larger, formal settings. That this individualized system is, that each faculty member has his say, because he knows someone else - the body is still too small to allow even with a membership of over 500, to be represented even at the one-to-one level.

The difference in the last few years was that this process broke down. Unlike the process of educational innovation, which from a faculty viewpoint can be handled over a period of several years, the faculty is confronted by political issues almost immediately. The question of whether MIT should close classes, the near threat of a vote not one that could be formed out of a committee for several months for consideration and the process of bargaining with the administration.

The real priority is for us to say what we think needs doing and for some of us to do the doing.

UROP

Wanted: a team of these undergraduates for a project on "Computer Controlled Cutting of Precious Stones." Details of this project, done in conjunction with a facutly member, will be made available to interested persons. Call Professor M. S. (32-3430) or Professor M. C. (32-3429). A project deadline of June 1.

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