Joint Urban Center examines city life

By Ken Knyfd

Despite the charm and wonder of life at the Institute we all must sooner or later face society and the real world. How do differential equations relate to reality? What will the MIT experience be like after? And last but not least, does the real world exist? An attempt to deal with these questions, The Tech recently journeyed to 68 Church Street in Cambridge to the MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies.

Presently under the direction of Prof. Bernard Frieden, the Center was established in 1959 to help build up urban planning departments at the two schools. Originally funded by the Ford Foundation, it was licensed to investigate all aspects of city life. The list of titles from early books by Urban Center associates ranges from Muslim Cities in the Late Middle Ages to Compiler Methods in the Analysis of Large Scale Social Systems and includes Beyond the Melting Pot. Former Center associates include Daniel P. Moynihan and directors Robert Wood and Charles Haar, both of whom later served as secretaries of the Bureau of Housing and Urban Development.

The purpose of the new projects deal with urban housing and all of them are now policy oriented. The three areas in which the Center is particularly involved are the establishment of national housing goals, the evaluation of existing programs, and the incorporation of consumers' points of view in the planning process. Thus, the role of the Center is one of defining the nature of the problem and the best techniques for striking solutions rather than one of highly applied research.

Director Frieden emphasized a seed for a proper mixture of several disciplines. In particular, he feels that urban planners have in the past tended to plan cities according to their own ideals and dislikes without adequate regard for the opinions of the people who have to live in them. The Center is presently using public polling techniques to compare public opinion with the possibilities of modern technology. Due to their history of contact with HUD, the personnel of the Center are also in a good position to help balance the elements of academic research and the realities of politics. An example of how this group of academics can interact with politicians is the centers investigation into the Model Cities Program. Recently they received $49,500 to study the program. As the first part of the project, associates of the Center have produced a series of abstracts for a Congressional Committee. The abstracts concentrate on institutional inhibitors to cheaper, better housing and a comparison of the effectiveness of such programs for housing improvements in urbanization, rehabilitation, and new construction.

* The Compton Lecture Series Committee will present Dr. Jerome Bruner in a lecture on "Models, Texts, and Human Pedagogy" tonight at 8 p.m. in Kresge Auditorium. For those without tickets, the doors will be open to the general public at 7:30 until remaining seats are filled.

* The MIT African Students Association is sponsoring an Africa Night, Saturday, April 8 in the Sala de Puerto Rico, MIT Student Center. There will be an exhibition of African arts and crafts, films on Africa, a tasty variety of African foods and a cultural show. Recorded music is also provided. Admission is free. The night is open to the public: Time 7 pm - 12 pm.

* Registration material for the 1972 summer session will be available on Wednesday, April 10, at the Registrar’s Office, E19-335. The registration forms must be filled in and returned to the Registrar’s Office by Wednesday, May 15.

* The National Endowment for the Humanities has established a new program, Young Professors in the Humanities, which offers an opportunity for young professors to explore their own interests in the Humanities and to change their educational and social environment. Proposed projects may concern any part of the Humanities, research of specific problems, or activities aimed at disseminating humanities knowledge and material. For a copy of the program call or visit Wyd Ailey Metcalf, 56044, Room 20C22.

* The Marine Technology Society is planning a seminar for the presentation of student papers for the Annual Meeting in Washington September 10-13, 1972. There is no restriction on the topics for the papers except that they should pertain to marine sciences, engineering, or technology. $150 prize for best paper presented at or below Bachelors level. For info, call or visit Amy Metcalf, 56044, 20C22.

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