Alumni, students discuss jobs

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Green made a pitch for solving the "blame it on the computer" syndrome by using computers "as intelligently as is humanly possible." With proper design at the beginning, and much care for details, he noted, a lot of the aggravation can be taken out of computerization. "Human engineering is just as important in computers as, say, consumer products, and very few companies seem to realize it."

The "Action Lines" of newspaper articles were full of complaints from frustrated consumers who are the victims of billing mistakes. More concerned efforts could reduce the number of mistakes and make them easier to correct," he said.

Szymanski described the sort of company he was looking for: "a creative, enjoyable, interesting environment. I don't want impersonality. I want to be a good engineer first, and take on management later."

Tanquary echoed Szymanski's feelings. "I don't think we need a professionalized department. I think we need personal interaction. And I think civic responsibility is more important to me than how much profit is made."

The final major topic of discussion was IBM. Various alumni described personal experience in advanced research at IBM's marketing system was its strong suit. They said that researchers get other forms of recognition--from their papers and their peers. One alumni complained that the researcher's salary merely had to be "adequate."

Joe McCluskey, an MIT grad, said that "the fun of being in business is dealing with people." He said that the mechanical problems are easily solved, but that the people problems are the toughest and the most fun. With a brief sigh of regret, he noted that he sometimes felt picked-on by environmentalists as a manager for the electric company, McCluskey got a good chuckle out of the group when he said that some problems were best solved by circumventing the established bureaucratic structure--he called it "adding humps to the system."

One of the younger alumni ("70 or so) proposed that profits were not bad, per se, but that too much profit became greed. Hoffman commented that while society tended to deplore big profits by a big company, we all want to make big money on our own. However, no one could agree on what was too much. Baxter elaborated on the question of technical rewards versus management rewards: "No tech will ever be paid as much as a loan officer who makes a killing. Remember that the real money in this country goes to the entertainers."

The final major topic of discussion was IBM. Various alumni who were familiar with the current antitrust case believed that the weight of public opinion was against the company, and that even though they felt it would be a bad decision, it appeared to them that IBM could be broken up. An interesting comment was made by one person; he felt IBM's marketing system was its best asset-it is so good, he said, that their equipment merely has to work.

One older alumni (30 or so) summed up the meeting pretty well when he said: "I think the problem with MIT is that it's a little too stuffy as Harvard... we used to have meetings like this much more often..."