The MIT decision process

By Paul Schindler

What is the major similarity among an MIT Faculty meeting and a national political convention? Each is merely feasts for the real decision making process, which occurs behind closed doors.

A small group of reasonable men, the Committee of Eighteen, meets in private session as often as is necessary or possible. They make recommendations which are, in general, passed without significant objection. Occasionally, however, the hands of the faculty who normally attend the meetings may offer amendments. And certainly, there is no interest on the part of people to change a suggestion after it has reached the floor.

In the main, however, the direction and thrust of faculty meetings is predetermined. The amendments are understandable: after all, even Democrats and Republicans are allowed to put on a show in public.

The governance of a university, however, is far less little more than our national parties. The high theory of universities is that power should circulate among the various structures. In any such structure, a few people, in this case interested faculty and senior administration, make the real decisions.

And real decisions are not strictly limited to the formal decision process. Implementation Real decisions include, but are not limited to those critical questions as agenda and timing.

Agenda

The agenda is the great unsung process of our times. Control of what will come up for discussion must be considered and discussed is the right to control the on-off switch on the bulldozer.

The long-established faculty policy that no decision can be made on an issue for which there has been no written advance notice virtually insures agenda hegemony. Even if someone brought something up from the floor, the agenda was decided until advance notice of it had been sent out. An uncharted issue could be treated poorly.

It is not to say that the faculty is being stifled by an imposed despotic process. What is the case is that the off-campus, the hands of the officers of the faculty who form the faculty agenda committee (according to faculty chairman Hartley Winer) Rogers, Rogers, this group is himself, the subcommittee of the chairman of the student faculty, and Dr. Wiener and Gre). Rogers, this group is comprised of faculty, suffering from the same inertia that afflicts all human beings, will not try very hard to override the built-in institutional barriers to widespread large-scale public discussion of major issues. It is better, they seem to feel, to keep the nuts and bolts behind the closed doors of the institution, to avoid the Comm. and reveal only the output, not the input, to the public.

Timing

Timing is the most insidious area of abuse, although it does not appear that it has been anything but random in the recent past. It is impossible to reflect the timing of faculty meetings, which is

THE WEEK OF ID

[Table of upcoming events]

(The Tech was sent a copy of this memo.)

To: Carl B. Eisenberg

Re: Symphony Orchestra

1. The tremendous attention which the Symphony Orchestra has received of late (even the acceptance of the MIRV report was scheduled for the same meeting as pacifist and Wellesley Ex) is an August body at the MIT faculty has limited facilities for concerts and it seems certain that more of the time involved will be devoted to the two major issues than the one minor.

2. Furthermore, delay in action on the already previously delayed report would seem foolish: here we can only hope that someone will act on a mechanism that will be developed to keep such issues from getting buried at the end of otherwise crowded meetings. The same goes for such things as the Chancellor's budget reports, and the "Report of the Special Committee on End-Of-Term Arrangements" made at the end of the last faculty meeting.

3. It appears that in all, there are clearly some faults with the official picture of power at MIT as presented near the beginning of this column. Of course, the fact remains that how MIT is run. In fact, it is a meritocracy run by a few infatuated faculty in any other lage organization. Let its face it and stop kidding around.

Attendance at faculty meetings

It might be possible to change this, if anyone wanted to. One way to do it would be to attend faculty meetings in large numbers. The number of people eligible to attend and vote at faculty meetings is stumpy, but lands in the neighborhood of 900. Only minimal war

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