Equality probed in seminar

By Juliet Molnar

A just society "makes no provision for individual inequality," according to Dr. Robert Nozick, professor of Philosophy at Harvard.

Nozick presented his point of view at a recent Technology and Culture seminar entitled "Justice and Equality." Nozick linked equality with the manner in which a man judges himself. "A person's self-esteem is measured with regard to others. If a person sees him- self as much less in some dimension than another person, he will consider himself inferior. ... Society tries to lessen these feelings of inferiority by marking everyone equal but it's rather a hopeless task. One can always find something against which to compare oneself."

Nozick gave the following example of what he considered to be a just but unequal distribution: "Suppose Wilt Chamberlain were to get the following contract: Anyone who wanted to put a quarter into a box at the stadium gate and the money would be given to Wilt. No one would be forced to give anything."

"Now suppose," Nozick continued, "that a million fans each put a quarter into the box. Wilt Chamberlain would get $250,000 for one night, much more than anyone else in that society gets. Is that fair?"

In Nozick's view, it would be. "If no one had a class on that money when it was in the fans' pockets, then how in the box to be inferior. ... Society tries to lessen these feelings of inferiority by marking everyone equal but it's rather a hopeless task. One can always find something against which to compare oneself."

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... back in savings against the cost of new equipment," Dickson said. Dickson also added that he thought the capital investments necessary would be substantial.

Parts of the Institute have been used as "test beds" to develop new ideas on energy conservation, Dickson said. He cited the Ford Building E118 as an example, where plans applicable to a number of buildings had been tested.

Results of this research, which was partially funded by a grant from the Union-Pacific Corporation, are being prepared for publication in the near future, Dickson said.

"If the world were completely just," Nozick continued, "then a person would be only entitled to something that was originally acquired fairly and in which all transfers were just. He would not be entitled to anything else."

"The world is not totally just, however, so we must postulate a third principle, that of rectification of injustice... I don't want to linger over it but ideally it would look at past injustices and see what the consequences of those injustices were, how the distribution would be, but they had not occurred. The present distribution would then be changed to match what would have occurred."

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