Group raises Cain over sign

By Stephen Blais

For decades the Cain's Mayonnaise-Potato Chips sign has stood amidst the shrubbery and traffic at the western end of the MIT campus, nightly flashing its red and blue neon message.

But if some MIT students have their way, the sign will be taken elsewhere, to the delight of many West Campus residents. MIT owns the sign and is leasing it to the John E. Cain Mayonnaise Company, which sold MIT the land on which the sign sits. The lease expires in 1980.

An effort to remove the sign by legal means was initiated in an IAP activity led by Tom Bracewell '76. The activity, called Bracewell, focused "on some way to convince MIT to take legal action against their own lease."

Currently, Bracewell and a Harvard Law student are studying the lease in hopes of finding loopholes that MIT could use to remove the sign. They expect to arrive at a conclusion by the end of the term as to whether legal action is feasible.

The group has not yet asked the Cain Company to remove its sign. Although Bracewell plans to speak with members of the company, he doubts they will listen.

"The sign is good advertising," said Bracewell, "with a good view along Storrow Drive. But the people who live in Westgate and MacGregor should be able to live in a decent environment, without that obstructive sign."

"It's disgusting to look at it all day," he explained. "It's like keeping a television set on 24 hours a day."

The MIT administration has not cooperated in helping the group get access to the lease and related documents, Bracewell said. However, he added "in the last few weeks, we've gotten a good response."

When the lease expires in 1980, Bracewell said, the MIT administration will probably not renew it, which may mean that the sign will then be removed.

But, said Bracewell, "I will have graduated by then."