Controversy over the proposed amendments to the by-laws of the Harvard Cooperative Society (Coop) has reached a peak several days before ballots on the measures are due.

The amendments, which would change the way student and non-student directors of the cooperative are elected, have run into fire from Coop critics who claim that the measures are attempts by incumbent Coop officers to remain in power.

The first of the two amendments, according to a letter from Coop President Milton P. Brown, will ensure "balanced representation of the three major student groups served by the Coop" by requiring that at least three student directors come from each of MIT, Harvard and Radcliffe undergraduates, and Harvard graduate students. Currently, nominations for the eleven student directors are controlled for representation, but election of the directors is done at large, so that all the student directors would theoretically come from one school.

The second amendment "would change the way the ten non-student, or faculty/alumni, directors are chosen. Instead of having a procedure for member-elected non-student directors, the proposed change would provide for election of three directors by the Coop stockholders."

"Abandoning free elections!" The changed procedures represent "a blatant attempt on the part of certain (Harvard) Law and Business School professors, incumbent Coop officers, to perpetuate their tenure," according to a letter to Harvard and MIT newspapers from Donald E. Steele (see page 5). Steele, a former Coop director and long-time critic of the cooperative, charged that the Coop officers are "abandoning free elections altogether" in modifying the procedures used in electing non-student directors.

Currently, 11 nominations for non-student directors are made by the 10 Coop stockholders, five of whom are students. If a non-student Coop member wishes to be nominated for a directorship, he must collect 100 signatures on a petition to be put in contention. If one or more petition nominations are received, a membership election is held to choose 11 directors.

The provisions for petition nominations have led to controversy in the past. Steele, who was an alumni director in 1973-74, is the only successful non-student director ever to be elected to the board of the Coop. Disputes over challenged signatures have led to disqualification of several other petitions for nomination in the last few years.

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