Student government—despair and hope

By Michael McNamara

There is a certain despair, a sense that seems to go hand-in-hand with writing about student government at MIT. The tapestries of MIT student government are woven every year during the election period; a few weeks later, they are sloughed off, less, so pointless, and yet so potent, so fraught with possible power and possible so worthily that it only seems to have been a dream. MIT student government at MIT is absolutely meaningless if viewed in terms of real participation, mass interest, and broad-based movement. It is deeply ironic, and extremely powerful if viewed in terms of the effect it has upon the..., a new version of the old rhetoric of the candidates, from being turned into another job, old, wearing a raccoon coat and scuffle outside. I stuck my head in the building after all. Glory. to satisfy him. His eyes brightened, heh-heh, a mistake, believe me, it was all a misunderstanding.”

As for the candidates, they have all chosen to campaign on platforms centered on “experi-"enace” in student activities and government; they all look as alike as the sound; there are no bright challenging faces running for a little bit of the serious purpose of doing something or student government. Even the I.D.A.P.M. candidacy of Larry Russell ’74 two years ago had more to offer than any of those; at least Larry was specific about the types of parties he was going to throw when he was elected.

With these dreary prospects, it may be wise to hold much hope for student govern-ment and have to give up when you’ve spent three years in the Student Center, seen so many really good people involved in so many really exciting activities, were so much effort put to such good use.

Some of the worst people it has ever been my burden to know have been student pols. But almost all the really good people I’ve known, the students I am really glad to have known, have been heavily involved in one activity or another. Good or bad, they are inevitably engrossing; no one who pulls all-nighters to plan a concert or get together a blood drive some day, to interact with people beyond their suite studying for a while, to interact with people beyond their suite or floor at all, and to do something that will win them no grades, no marks, nor grades, nothing but the satisfac-tion of having done it.

That’s a tall order. But watch these dreary prospects, for all other reason than to keep the Student Center from being turned into another college lab, student govern-ment still has some promise. The promise becomes mind-boggling when one considers the potential effect of having all MIT students involved in something a little more far-sighted than their next test or their final exam. Perhaps the roots of the MIT malady could be removed by something as simple as getting everyone involved in an activity— involved enough to forget about studying for a while, to interact with people beyond their suite or floor at all, and to do something that will win them no grades, no marks, no grades, nothing but the satisfac-tion of having done it.

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