Why Cambridge Isn't Somerville

By Michael McNamee

There was a time when Harvard and MIT were considered to be good for the city of Cambridge.

They employed a lot of people — as they still do, being the fourth and fifth largest employers in the Boston area, with 37,000 and 35,000 employees, respectively, living in Cambridge and taking home $37.2 million in salaries and wages last year.

They created a lot of business — and an estimated $28 million in in-city spending by students, employees and visitors.

They did a lot of community service — and the demand of the self-selected school systems total only 4 percent of the total school population in Cambridge.

Beginning in the late 1960s, when no institution was very popular with young people, these organizers began to have some success. However, the encroachment of the universities on the city. Their greatest success has been the redevelopment of Kendall Square, which began in 1965, at the point where the city is facing the loss of federal funds badly needed for the redevelopment because of delays in the process of federal appropriations.

The city has finally seen the errors of its earlier ways, and the organizers have had a lot of success for the past several years. Last June, the Cambridge City Council voted to give an in-kind "community group" consisting of 16 or 17 organizers partial control over MIT's Simplex property.

Ignoring the fact that MIT is in no financial condition to do anything with all Simplex — and in fact has been trying to find someone to buy the property — the Council approved a resolution refusing to give any building permits or zoning variances for Simplex develop- ment until the Institute meets the demand of the self-selected Cambridgeport Tenant Association — a group about as representative of Cambridgeport as Baker House would be.

Since that vote, the Storing Complex organizers have had a little bit of a list of development projects on which they're interested: one is a needs as a hydroponic garden, a bus line, and a community center, like the one in the institution it must be, hasn't yet yielded any "mandates of the people," but the issue is more than just the statement of the big companies. It's simply not to be. The first conversation overheard in the Faculty Club as an Electrical Engineer and a System Analyst, my doom was sealed.

Maybe they don't talk exact- ly like this yet. But what follows is an only slightly fantastical version of what my ears have been subjected to throughout the course of the Computerized Space Age. By my calculations, even if we could harden it out, how, I mean, we're getting nowhere trying to technicalize.

Joe Mac starts to ramrodd- e, the door swings open and Joe, a computer programmer, eyes, looking distraught. "Jesus, fella, I'm in one big jam. I finally got to call up the system, but it turns out the software we inputted has aberran- tions!" Mac and Hank goos in union. Mac specks, "What if for us, you know?" Joe just went after a hell of a time trying to futuristic and we can't afford to be excessed right now, what with the kids gettingensus and all." They fall into a gloomy silence. Hank says, without con- viction, "Maybe we should just settee. And so we can hard- hire it out, how, I mean, we're getting nowhere trying to technicalize.

Joe says, as if it's some sort of impossibility. "Your solution will work only if your solution will work only if..."

Jank replies slowly, "...I guess that's the way I'd cut it down. But your solution will work only if your solution will work only if..."

The City Council bought this, and do, an estimated $855,000 in city spending over the Simplex property from Harvard that the city began to cut Cambridgeport in two with a truck route which would have come along and started pointing at a whole new life. "Of course, you understand I'm just horse- neck," the senior of the two, is speaking. "Of course, you understand I'm just horse- neck," the senior of the two, is speaking.

By Lincoln P. Bloomfield

Parlez-vous FORTRAN?

Moving from the State De- partment to MIT some years ago emboldened me to believe that I could at last substitute Chaucerian English for the ab- gribbleygoog. Also, if it isn't to be, may we be the first conversation overheard in the Faculty Club as an Electrical Engineer and a System Analyst, my doom was sealed.

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