Stop & Shop hassles students

By Eileen Mananix

MIT students, as well as other Cambridge residents, must add another inconvenience to the difficulties of cooking for themselves.

 Habitual customers of Stop & Shop have, by this time, either learned to contend with the fact that shopping carts can no longer be removed from the rear of the store, or have taken their business elsewhere.

 Stop & Shop Manager Bernie Goldstein told The Tech that the barricades around the store's entrance, which prevent customers from leaving the confined area with shopping carts, were necessitated by Stop & Shop's heavy and ever-increasing losses. "I know of at least a thousand [carts] that have been stolen over the last four years," Goldstein said, adding that at $55 each, such thefts represent a significant loss of property.

 Stop & Shop previously sent a truck to MIT dormitories to periodically retrieve carts brought home by student shoppers. The cost of these pick-ups was not the deciding factor in the policy change, remarked Goldstein, but rather the fact that "we just aren't getting enough of them back." This may be due in large part to the fact that most Cambridge residents who use the carts to bring groceries home do not have the opportunity to leave them in a safe place where Stop & Shop will be able to find them.

 One MIT student was threatened with arrest a few weeks ago near Tang by a Cambridge policeman. The student had brought a shopping cart that was found on campus, locked it about a block away from Stop & Shop, and was returning with it and his groceries when he was accosted by the police officer.

 The student, a MacGregor resident, says he persuaded the policeman to allow him to return home with the groceries, and afterwards he was forced to bring the cart back to Stop & Shop.

 Stop & Shop is apparently prepared to deal with failure incidents with as much severity as any other theft worth as much money. "That's our property," said Goldstein, "and we take stealing them [the carts] very seriously."

 Many MIT students have been forced to make more frequent trips to cut down on the size of their grocery bills or to coordinate their shopping trips with those of someone who owns a cart. Others have taken their business to the Cambridge Food Coop, which has lower prices and proximity to bus service. Purity Supreme, which prices are comparable to Stop & Shop, is also a short bus ride from campus.

 Goldstein does not foresee a major decrease in business, however. No decrease has become evident so far, he asserts; instead, if business can be measured by the number of shopping carts sitting idle, then Stop & Shop couldn't be doing better. On three days of last week, Goldstein noticed that there were no carts to be had—all were in use inside the store.

 Goldstein is by no means oblivious, however, to the problems that the barricades have presented, particularly to student customers. Two-wheeled shopping carts are now sold at Stop & Shop for $6.95. They are valued at $12 to $15, but the store obtains them at a reduced cost.

 Goldstein considered making 100 carts available to the dormitory system, but it was felt that they would disappear from MIT even more than they do from Stop & Shop. A shuttle bus service was suggested by Dickor and Weiss, but Goldstein felt that the cost would be too exorbitant. A charge of $2.25 was proposed as a possible fare. Dickor still hopes the bus service is feasible and possible fare. Dickor still hopes the bus service could be done better. On three

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