There's more to MIT than just academics

By William Laser

In September of 1969 the freshmen of the Class of '73 arrived on campus. They paid $250 each in tuition their first year. The Tech wrote that they would have to "face up to some issues bigger than week-end problem sets." Eight years later, tuition has almost doubled — to $4350 a year. The money now that they have is as much as it was in the beginning, but the toughest problem most freshmen will have to solve will probably come from the MIT bureaucracy each spring term: whom to blame for which department's maladministration.

The decisions faced by MIT freshmen — where to live, what to eat, which courses to take, whom to date — is dwarfed by the massive social forces confronting their counterparts a decade ago. Before the Class of '73 entered its second year, it had already lived through riots, prisoners' marches and demonstrations in front of the Student Center, and on and off campus across the country. The climax came in May of 1970 when four students were killed at Kent State.

It must have been quite an education. MIT was described as a "matured educational experience," where "you are faced with some heavy stuff in your educational career." The Tech wrote how MIT students were faced with the "toughest problem most freshmen will have to solve will probably come from the MIT bureaucracy each spring term: whom to blame for which department's maladministration.

But as a student at MIT, I have never felt the pressure cooker described by the Tech and other periodicals. The MIT bureaucracy is not as important to me as the educational experience. MIT is a place where I have learned to solve problems, both intellectual and personal. MIT has given me the opportunity to explore the world around me while still focusing on education. But an education does not consist only of learning, but also of living. In a sense, the MIT experience is a microcosm of the world outside the classroom. You have the opportunity to make a difference. Twenty, years from now, no one will ask about the wealth of opportunities waiting for them outside the classroom.

I do not feel that I am taking full advantage of MIT and the real world. In practice, things are not always as they seem. I have had to make many decisions during R/O week. I think it is important to make these decisions carefully. The people of Unruch have the opportunity to solve problems. But after waiting three weeks I got just what I was looking for. The people of Unruch are facing many of the same problems that I am. I hope that I can make a difference.

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