This year the first two days of classes fall on the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana. The two days of Rosh Hashana are among the most important in all of Israel, and in many Orthodox, Conservative or Reform. For the Institute to schedule the opening of the academic year on a day that so much religious observance, then, would be a great disadvantage for those students and faculty whose religious beliefs will keep them from attending.

Provost Walter Rosenblith, in his statement of Institute policy regarding religious holidays, maintains that students "should not be placed at academic disadvantage as a consequence" of religious observances. What, then, of the religious observances of students who either defer to meaningless introductory lectures or characterize the opening of classes when their Jewish classmates return on Thursday?

Normally, Rosh Hashana falls in the second week of the term. By that time, most students are sufficiently settled into the semester's courses to be able to make arrangements for missed work. However, missing the first two days of classes will result in difficulties for many students; freshman will be especially inconvenienced. When Rosh Hashana or any other religious holiday, such as Yom Kippur or Good Friday, falls on weekdays during the semester, the problems encountered have always been minimal in comparison to the general consternation among the Jewish student body on campus today and tomorrow.

The Institute of Technology Council, the group of virgin students that another schedule configuration would have been difficult, although not impossible, to devise. Missed the second day although as much as two days later would have interfered with the Institute's policy of holding examination week before the new school term. However, the term one week earlier would see a viable alternative.

Had the semester begun last week, with Friday, September 10, as the Monday holiday, the problems would have been greatly alleviated this week. At worst R/O Week would have been shortened by a day or two so that the Institute would have time to get in shape after the end of the summer session a week earlier.

While Rosenblith is correct in asserting that MIT "is a secular, non-denominational institution," we think it is important to take into consideration the personal beliefs of a large segment of the student body.

**Text of Berke's speech**

The following is the text of an address by Undergraduate Association President Peter Berke to the incoming class at the freshman picnic on Sept. 2, 1977:

Everything here is numbers or three-letter abbreviations. Peter is the UAP, Mrs. Eisenberg is the ISA. He's on the IFC. He's R/O chairman. He's on DormCon -- Dormitory Council. They would have called it DC -- but that's taken.

There was a move to change the name of the school last year. This go, in the admissions office want to Yale and thought they could call it, nor Yale, nor Allwhite. Because it practically is. Other people didn't like Allwhite -- they thought we would call it Allwhite. Look around. Some of us already call it that.

A woman and I were talking about groups at MIT. Everybody sticks with their little group and thinks they're different from the rest of MIT. We have a saying: "There is no group at MIT. The MIT thinks the other 95 percent are ['and his friends'] and the others are['and his friends'].

What will you learn here? You will learn to stand up. There's no place in classes if you get cold out. You will learn what to do when a friend is getting married. There are two common approaches. One type of people -- I call them chum shufflers. Their chin armpit and shuffle sideways. Then there are the smart smilers. They look down the hall, a fixed smile on their face, a glint in their eyes -- as if they are thinking: "I'm so smart. I'm so glad I'm thinking what I'm thinking now. And I'm so involved in it I can't even see you."

There's another way that's easier. It goes like this: "Hi!" "Hi." It's also symmetrical in time.

If you will learn to walk fast. A professor in the Electrical Engineering department told me once he judges the value of a man by the speed at which he walks. I don't know if slow or fast is better.

Pressure at MIT: It starts with finding a place to live in one week, and it doesn't stop. Look -- this is a hard, bleak, isolating environment. It is for everyone here. Whether they know it or not they're being judged [sic] Remember that later when you get a seat on the subway in the school newspaper.

There's an article in the Boston magazine this month about MIT. It says that the problem of student housing is for everyone this year. It's hard for us to describe MIT. You get used to anything in time. We want you to tell us how you have adapted to fit MIT when it didn't adapt to you. Details will appear in the school newspaper.

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I'd like to close with a quote from Robert Frost. "Nothing fits us for the problem of students for the future like beggars who maim their children so that they can become successful beggars." So a beggar may cut off his own hand. He should go to the Undergraduate Association President Peter Berke to the incoming class at the freshman picnic on Sept. 2, 1977.

**Opinion**

Institute problems not insurmountable

By William Lasser

A Boston magazine article claims that MIT is "intimidating and ex-otic." The Undergraduate Association President says that this is a "hard, bleak, isolating environment." All these problems are nothing very wrong with a MIT student.

All the evidence, that is, except most of the facts. A near-record number of freshmen have just arrived at MIT. If they had decided that based on what we see from the outside looking in, MIT is the wrong place for them, we would have far more freshmen that MIT handed out degrees to some 691 people who decided to stick around and finish.

"The idea is that MIT will teach you to solve other people's problems and ignore your own," UAP Peter Berke told the entering freshmen 11 days ago at the Student Picnic. He compared being a freshman to hitchhiking to the top of a mountain and then being thrown off so that they can become successful beggars. He warned that: "You have to pay close attention to just see what you're losing, much less prevent it."

Berke's speech was greeted for the most part with disapproval. A familiar comment after the picnic, "What he said was true but it was too soon to tell what this is like." Others feel that MIT takes too long to make a decision. The anti-establishment candidate who eked out a narrow victory in the MIT election last spring by promising dancing classes and places to sit down, and whose first official action was to give student groups the right to have rallies on the trees by some time in April. "It's true that the problem is the most confused point. It's true that the speech was out of place, rather like a beggar getting a box full of blankets. It's true that once they got to the front that they had no chance. It's also true that Berke seemed to mock the usual university establishment. It's a great emphasis on the personal and human at the Institute which extends from environmental protection studies to letting freshmen have a lot to say about what they learn and how they learn it." It concludes: "If your bent is technology, MIT is definitely the place to go."

We have so far asked: What is MIT? The answer to this question is less than vigorous. There is a satisfaction in their very survival: life is no breeze here, but if you can make it, you can be proud of it. Being screwed by the Institute and living to tell about it makes you feel better. It's a great sport to make award medals instead of degrees.

It has gained to the point where one feels uncomfortable saying "I like it here." My guess is that most people do like it. Prospective freshmen visit in April and hear universal negative comments. Some turn around and head for Harvard or Princeton. Some shake their heads, seeing through the disguise. "I can't be there," they think, and a few months later they find out it isn't; but they dare not say so.

Berke suggested that there is something wrong with this place because people walk down the halls thinking "I'm so involved I can't even eat." He should go some place where people have nothing to do. He told the freshmen that they will learn to stand up at MIT, because "there's no place to sit when it gets cold out." He should go to some place where they want to spend the next four years. And last June 6, MIT had a victory over intelligence.

It is for everyone here. Whether they know it or not they're being judged [sic] Remember that later when you get a seat on the subway in the school newspaper.

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"To tell you the truth, I'm still an un-"}

The Tech

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