Moving the commencement from Rockwell Cage to the Great Court, the traditional site of the Freshman Picnic, would enable at least 1,000 more people to attend the ceremony. (Photo by Tom Kilmorick)

Where should graduation be?

(Continued from page 1)

more hot or humid. In dry weather, a ceremony held there could be spectacular.

The only big problem would be how to proceed in the event of rain on graduation day. Rockwell Cage would be available as a backup location, but only at considerable expense. It is not a matter of simply setting up 5000 chairs and a few flowers to prepare the Cage. Physical Plant requires five weeks and $40,000 merely to make the Cage serviceable — building the stage, raising the floor, setting up loudspeakers, canopies, lighting rooms, signs, ramps, stairways, and numerous other details. It is a behemoth operation. Drapes, curtains, carpets, and other frills are but a small portion of the cost. MIT is understandably reluctant to go to this expense without assurance of using the Cage. Even were it tantamount to go to this expense without assurance of using the Cage. Even were it tantamount to go to this expense without assurance of using the Cage.

Moving the commencement from Rockwell Cage to the Great Court and Rockwell Cage.

Fortunately, this problem of rain would be a rare one. Only once in the past thirty years has it rained during an MIT commencement — 1 inch between 11:45 and 12 noon in 1968 — and for the first ten days of June there is but a 7 percent chance of showers.

An alternative to using the Great Court is to split what is now one ceremony into an undergraduate and a graduate ceremony to be held separately. This would relieve the overcrowding in Rockwell. However, since the Cage is too hot to be used in the afternoon, ceremonies would have to be on successive mornings. The Faculty and the MIT Corporation are very reluctant to stay around for an extra day to participate in a second ceremony.

Another option is for diplomas to be presented in departmental ceremonies prior to or after an Institute-wide ceremony. At present, President Wiesner presents diplomas to students as they walk across a stage in Rockwell. Students do not shake his hand. This form of presentation requires 1 3/5 hours of the 2 1/3 hour ceremony.

In a departmental ceremony, the chairman of a department would present diplomas to the students in his department. While such separate ceremonies would not provide more room in the Cage, they would relieve the crowding by greatly shortening the ceremony by the length of time normally given to the presentation of diplomas. Further, they would provide an intimacy between faculty and students not possible in the large ceremony.

Finally, for lack of any other solution, ceremonies might be forced into a large auditorium off campus, such as Hynes Auditorium, which is large enough to accommodate everyone. Having commencement away from MIT is seen by many as the least desirable option.

No one knows which option will be preferred by students. To this end, the Student Committee on Commencement and the Senior Class are currently conducting a survey of all undergraduates, asking their views on the importance and form of graduation exercises.

Whatever changes are made, they should be made within a few years. Rockwell Cage gets larger only by the stretching of the walls by the ever-growing graduating classes who must use the building. It is a great shame to MIT's engineering excellence that it usually manages, despite all obstacles, to adapt Rockwell Cage to a use to which few would dream of putting it. What clearer manifestation is there of the essence of MIT — the urge to attack the impossible. However, it should be remembered that many people would be happier in other surroundings which, though less sophisticated, would be much more comfortable.

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