I. "That, like many legal questions, has the potential to screw us royally," said Joe Chapman, "Chairman of the MIT Interfraternity Conference, at last Wednesday's IFC meeting.

What's worrying Chapman and many other people connected with MIT's fraternity system, is an ambiguity in the enabling legislation for Massachusetts Classification Amendment, which will be Question One on the November 7th ballot. The Amendment, if passed, would allow cities and towns to tax up to four different "classes" of properties at different rates. An enabling act, the definition of those four classes of property as "commercial," "residential," "industrial and manufacturing." But this usual precise statute, which devotes over a page to the careful definition of those four terms, has a hole just big enough for a fraternity to fall through.

HR 6054 defines the four classes of property as "commercial," "residential," "industrial and manufacturing." But this usually precise statute, which devotes over a page to the careful definition of those four terms, has a hole just big enough for a fraternity to fall through. HR 6054's definition section ends with the sentence, "Residential property shall not include a hotel, motel or lodging house." The statute fails to define "lodging house." Lowell Richards, Deputy Director of Fiscal Affairs for the City of Boston, claims that the reference to lodging houses "slipped into" the bill, and would be ignored by the city. But such statements from city officials fail to reassure Chapman and other fraternity people.

In order to operate at all, according to Chapman, fraternities are required to buy "lodging house licenses" from the city due to the large number of unrelated people living together in them. And under Classification, the difference between residential and commercial taxes will be substantial: a building worth $100,000 on the open market would pay $690 as a residence, but $12,100 as a commercial property under Boston's current tax rate of $256 per $1000 of assessed value.

But fraternity residents can ill afford to dismiss classification just because of this risk. In next month's election, the alternative to classification will be not the status quo, but rather "100% valuation," a court-ordered scheme to tax all property at the same rate regardless of its use. A recent study prepared for the Massachusetts Mayor's Association estimates that under 100% valuation, residential property owners (and indirectly, renters) will have to pay $263 million in property taxes that are now paid by business.

Next week: A look at the history of statewide opposition to it.

Tuesday, October 24, 1978

THE UA NEWS

NomComm Hearings
Monday October 23, 1978
7:00pm IAP Policy Committee
This committee was established to deal with policy matters and the continued evaluation of the Independent Activities Period, and to work closely with the Committee on Educational Policy in reviewing IAP within the context of the total academic environment. It reports fully to the faculty at intervals of not more than four years.

Hearing will be this Thursday evening at 7:00pm in room 400 of the Student Center.

The topics to be discussed this week are: the eleven college conference that is currently in its planning stages; the possibility of joint ventures with other colleges in the greater Boston area; the Tuition Assistance Fund and several possibilities for UA Social events.

Always in the near future the UA will be sponsoring Wednesday Afternoon Social Hours with Faculty and Students to discuss specific topics in an informal environment. The first of these will be titled "The Student-Faculty Link. How can we increase communication at MIT?" Check the UA bulletin board for details.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions relating to the UA call Barry Newman or Tim Morgenthaler at x3-2696.

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