Can the 'Tute afford another New House

By Bob Wasserman

At this moment a potentially "hot" issue on the MIT Campus, what a new dormitory in the west campus will be like, is now being buried under committee reports and ignored due to academic disorganization.

The question of whether or not MIT needs a new dormitory in the near future is more or less taken for granted. Last month the MIT Corporation gave its permission to the Institute for the project to go ahead with planning for a new dormitory to be built on Leadership Campaign funds. The building would be a single-story structure, costing $1.6 million and costing $8 per square foot. The necessary funds are expected to be raised through housing transfer and redirected students, who currently have little or no access to MIT on-campus housing. The three hundred spaces to be included in the dorm will also help ease the present overcrowding in the other dorms, which gets worse every year.

Even if the new dorm solves all these various space problems, though, there still may be room left for additional undergraduates, enabling the MIT administration to expand enrollment. Although the Academic Council has set a limit on each of the next few entering classes at an acceptable 1050, the temptation might be great enough to forego these construction are not easily obtained, however, and it is likely that a 'man-day to the amount spent four years ago to build New House. Funds for the basic limitations to the success of the new dorm is its resemblance in said Team member Tom Potter '79, and plans were made to include a fund to solicit comments from residents.

Current debate among the planning team members centers around the inside design and facilities of the new dorm, for MIT Vice President Philip A. Stoddard related that the administration has already determined that the new dorm will be a low-rise structure with an exterior similar to the of New House. The MIT Corporation has set aside $8 million for construction of the dorm, an amount which lends itself most easily to a type of structure such as New House.

Realizing that they must make the new dorm attractive to students, (the dorm will be the first at the front door of residence halls) said Team member Tom Potter '79, and plans were made to include a dining hall or a central commons area for a large party or house meeting. What the planning committee did not realize, however, is that one of the basic limitations to the success of the new dorm is its resemblance in size and shape to New House, a factor already out of consideration. This brings up the basic finances of the new dorm. The planned bill of $8 million is a small price tag for a new college dormitory, similar to the amount spent four years ago to build New House. Funds for construction are not easily obtained, however, and it is likely that a major decision will be made for the new dorm as was the case for New House. The Leadership Campaign is still in progress, though, and it is possible that more funds could be acquired for the dorm in the future.

Although the hectic pace of completion construction in Fall 1981 would have to be moved back, the added raised capital might make it possible to build an architecturally sound and attractive dorm.

The Program Planning team must continue to seek out student input for the interior living arrangements and style of the new dorm. Beyond this, however, students and administrators should also consider the external nature and even the necessity of the building.