

Editorial

Drinking bill no solution

Last week, Governor Ed King proposed a bill to the Massachusetts legislature which would immediately raise the legal drinking age in this state to 19 and six months later raise the age to 21. The bill seeks to address a real problem of drunk driving, but we think it goes about this in the wrong way. In fact, King's solution creates more problems than it solves.

First, there is no indication the new bill will do any good. Nobody has proven that legal drinking ages will have any effect on drunk driving. A popular quote in the debate on the drinking age is "You've given me a lot of figures, but you haven't given me any statistics." Students drink in junior high school even though they are well below the legal drinking age. Marijuana has been tried by 42 million

Americans even though it is illegal. If people want something, they'll get it; one more obstacle doesn't make much difference.

Second, the new bill will encourage students to drive into states where the drinking age is 18 in order to obtain alcoholic beverages. Students will then drink in other states and drive back to Massachusetts. Contrary to its purpose, the bill may thus result in an increase in teenage drunk driving.

We believe the answer to the drunk driving problem lies in education and rehabilitation, not in drinking ages. Only by attacking the problem directly using frank discussion will there be any positive results. Prohibitions have not worked in the past; there is no indication they will work in the future.

8½ percent is too damn much

By Tom Curtis

The Institute screw has struck again. While our parents accept seven per cent wage increases under President Carter's guidelines, MIT has raised its tuition by eight and one-half per cent.

MIT administration officials point out the the tuition increase is below the 1978 increase in the Consumer Price Index. But is that really the relevant standard for measuring the increase? Isn't it more important that the increase in tuition is more than our families' wage increase?

The fact is this tuition increase will be an added burden on all students from the middle income families who cannot get financial aid. It could also hurt students on financial aid if the equity level is increased by more than seven per cent. Certainly, MIT is a less attractive school because of the tuition increase.

No easy solution to revenue problem

But, MIT argues, a tuition increase is the only way to raise the necessary revenue. There is some truth to this. Ever since the Sputnik scare ended in the late 60's, the federal government has cut back on research projects, which are an important source of revenue for schools like MIT. Senator William Proxmire hasn't helped either. His Golden Fleece Award for research projects which appear to be inane has brought demands for even more cuts in government research funding.

Furthermore, fundraisers have been hampered in their efforts by the uncertain state of the economy in the 1970's. People are reluctant to give to the college of their choice when they think they might need the money to make ends meet next year.

An easy solution to this problem would be to increase enrollment and thereby increase tuition revenues without actually increasing tuition. The experiences of the last several years has shown that this doesn't work, however. Increased class size means increased facilities or dilution of quality. Either way, it's no solution.

Thus, MIT does face genuine problems in raising revenue. However, I doubt MIT has done all it can to raise necessary revenues from elsewhere. For instance, the Leadership Campaign has been very successful in raising money for nonessential programs, such as the two new Colleges, but much less successful in raising money for projects which are badly needed. The effort should be redirected towards raising funds for those things which are needed now; the other programs can wait a while.

Find creative ways to cut expenses

MIT also claims it cannot cut many more programs without hurting educational quality. True, many programs have already been cut as far as they can be. Already, lab courses are overcrowded and understocked. But MIT must look for creative ways to cut its expenses without cutting quality. Here are two suggestions:

1. Discontinue purchases of modern art. A large segment of the MIT community is offended by this type of art and would be glad to see it go. Those who like modern art already have plenty to see.

2. Cut thermostats a few more degrees. My room at MIT is kept warmer than my room in South Carolina. We can stand to wear sweaters. Besides, this measure would not only save money but also conserve energy.

These are just two ways MIT might cut expenses. I'm sure many other ways could be found.

Something definitely must be done. This tuition increase is truly too damn much. If MIT continues to increase tuition faster than wages, it will lose many top quality students to lower-priced state-supported schools and the quality of MIT will go down. But if MIT continues to cut programs as it has done for the last several years, educational quality will be just as severely damaged. Creative management is critically necessary at this time.

It could have been worse

Finally, take heart in the news that MIT has the lowest tuition increases of any major private school in the greater Boston area. Boston University kicked its tuition up by \$490. Tufts tried to increase its tuition by a whopping \$700. Student protests eventually knocked the increase down to a mere \$590, however.

Even the rich kids up the river will have to live with a bigger increase. Harvard upped its tuition by \$450, but as a consolation, students did win a concession of free toilet paper.

Local music thrives on some stations

To the editor:

The "Flip Side" column which appeared in your January 31 issue showed a lack a broad perspective of the Boston radio market when the author stated that very little music performed by local musicians is available on radio in the Greater Boston area. It may be true that local music is unavailable on commercial radio stations, but this is not true for Boston area non-commercial radio stations.

First, let me define commercial and non-commercial radio stations. Commercial stations include all AM stations operating from 540 khz to 1610 khz carrier frequency, and all FM stations operating from 92 mhz to 108 mhz carrier frequency. Non-commercial stations are restricted to 88 mhz to 92 mhz carrier frequency, and the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) requires that the holders of licenses for non-commercial stations be non-profit organizations (for example, the WGBH foundation in the case of WGBH). Because the continued existence of non-commercial stations is not governed by the whimsy of the radio advertising marketplace, as is the case for commercial stations, non-commercial stations tend to broadcast music, in addition to other programming, which is both generated by and tailored to the individuals in the local listening area.

Second, the author's discussion of the value of the programming aired by the two stations she studied in depth, WBCN and WCAS, ignored some of the realities of the "radio marketplace" that broadcasters have come to accept.

1) A feature of local music on the *Boston Sunday Review* on WBCN from 8 am to noon (for one weekend only) is about as effective in bringing local music to the people as using a squirt gun on a five alarm fire. For commercial radio stations, Sunday morning is Public Affairs time because little advertising money is lost. Advertisers won't buy time when most of their audience is hung over, still stoned, at church, or asleep.

2) Airing local music on WCAS (740 AM) carries its own kind of death because WCAS is a dawn-to-dusk operation. The two periods of time with the greatest listenership are "morning drive" (6-9 am) and "evening drive" (4-7 pm). In the winter, which is basically half the year, WCAS is prohibited from broadcasting when listenership is the highest — when people are driving to and from work. Furthermore, WCAS's inferior signal quality (5

khz bandwidth for AM as opposed to 15 khz bandwidth for FM) insures that those listeners who crave local music, are fidelity conscious, and are not already WCAS devotees never hear the station because the selector switch on their radio never leaves the FM band.

3) The author temporarily forgot the composition of *The Tech's* readership when she bemoaned the fact that WCAS (100 watts) and WTBS (10 watts, and the only non-commercial station mentioned in the column) are both "low power" stations. I doubt that many serious readers of *The Tech* who are also serious Greater Boston radio listeners live outside Route 128, which is the approximate boundary of the coverage area of both WCAS and WTBS.

Third, there is an abundance of locally composed and performed music available on non-commercial FM radio in the Boston area. For example: WGBH presents the Boston Symphony Orchestra, from Boston in the winter and Tanglewood in the summer, and almost weekly live performances from their

studios ranging from poetry to chamber music to jazz bands. WBUR showcases classical music performed by BU musicians, and WHRB is known for its presentation of the evolving Cambridge folk scene. WMFO at Tufts broadcasts on campus musical events from large scale concerts to intimate coffee house size affairs originating from Tuft's equivalent of The Muddy Charles. WERS has been playing local New Wave music during their rock programs since before it was even called Punk.

WTBS is MIT's indigenous radio station. The station has been at the cutting edge of broadcasting from its inception as a carrier current station in 1947 through the start of FM broadcasting at 88.1 mhz in 1961 to the present efforts (as reported in *The Tech*) to increase its power from 10 watts to 200 watts. The station's list of musical first includes "siring" progressive radio in the mid-60's with Mr. T, Tom Gamache, the area's first disco radio program, The Right Track, back in 1974, and a regular

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