**Opinion**

**Dining plan threatens residence program**

Well, boys and girls, you may be sick of hearing about it, but it's time for what might be the last chance to look at the Dining Committee Report. Today's question is: will the "social and educational benefits" of the Combined Dining and Residence Program outweigh the hardships — economic and gastronomic — of "mandatory commons" in half the dormitories?

**Joseph Freshman '84**

Let's focus on the plight of Joseph Freshman '84, as a prospective case in point. Joe arrives on campus and enters the Fresh Hall. He visits the facts where, by more way, MIT seems much more pro-active about which "social and educational benefits" a student absorbs in his home life.

Joe decides to live in the dorms. Now, four days into R/0 Week, he must decide not only what living environment he desires, but also what dining style he wants. As if R/0 Week wasn't tough enough already.

In touring the dorms, Joe encounters the "distinctly different lifestyles" in each dorm cited in that year's Residence Book. This diversity has always been viewed as one of the unique strengths of our housing system. Yet, according to the Committee Draft: "Concern for diversity (in dining styles) represents a sense of responsibility in the character of residential life." Again, one wonders about the diversity in fraternities.

Back to Joe. He wallows through the fragmented system trying to balance the "distinctly different lifestyles." With the opposing dining plans as an integral part of lifestyle, that's still a lot to take in and a weekend and Joe's perception of some of the dormitories (notably Burton and East Campus) are bound to be altered.

Let's say Joe moves into Baker (or any Commons dorm). He lives there happily for a year.

In May, Joe starts to think about next year. He looks at his budget. The only item he has any control over is Room and Board. He can no longer change one without the other. So, if Joe wants to lower any of the costs which he effectively set after less than 100 hours in Cambridge, he must leave his friends and move to another dorm. What does he do?

According to the Committee: "Some mobility (among houses) can be important to individuals in terms of enlarging their sphere of experience and acquaintances." To this end, it recommends appointing committees switching dorms not lose room priority. This is a wonderful sentiment, and quite true, but shouldn't the motivation for changing houses be a desire for such new experiences rather than the totally unrelated economic need to change dining options?

Also, if trends continue as today, with upclassmen progressively leaving commons, there will be a heavy tide of upclassmen heading toward Cooking Houses. Thus, in order to avoid the undesirable possibility of creating Freshman and Upperclass dorms, we would need another, complicated lottery to allocate upclass spaces in the dorm system. Now this is normal in many schools, but the outcome of such a lottery elsewhere does not impact on dining or economics. Whether or not Joe will be able to save money will be decided in this lottery.

Then, to avoid such a mass exodus, commons must be upgraded to the point where students will want to remain on it. One important aspect of this would be lowering dining costs. Yet, according to Gene Brauer of Housing and Food Services, Commons can never be as cheap as cooking. Will improvements in Commons make the difference, then?

Unlikely. The capital improvements outlined in the report are very expensive and there appears no quick way to raise the funds. Totally dedicating Morss Hall to East Campus appears, to people involved in the process, logistically impossible. Other improvements, such as adding dining kitchens in Senior House, and computerizing the checking system, will take time.

In the Commons won't be spiffy and upgraded in 10 months for the Class of '84. And, pragmatically speaking, what is to guarantee the improvements will ever be made if Dining Service need not fear losing their customers? Only a very, very aggressive Deans' Office could prevent neglect.

**Student body must act**

What now? Well, in spite of the fact that this plan tosses the Residence Program blindly into rocky, uncharted waters and will impose even more economic and psychological pressures on students like Joe than our already unique rooming situation does, there has been little outcry. Perhaps the plan's grandfather clause has cleverly taken the wind out of everyone's sails. In any case, Chancellor Gray has expressed his belief that this report "considers all views," and will take time.

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**Erik Sherman**

**The Senate argues ethics**

By Erik Sherman

"Herman Talmidge, come up here!" the voice boomed. The cloaked figure sat behind a massive desk in the oak paneled hall. Off in a shaded corner, a person covered. "Yes, sir," the tiny figure piped. He walked up to the desk and knelt.

"Do you know why you have been called before the Senate Ethics Committee, Herman?"

"Yes, sir. All've been a bad boy."

"And the fact is that you have done wrong and the public demands punishment."

"Just a little."

"That doesn't matter, Herman. You have done wrong and the public demands punishment."

"Well, sir, could pay back the money five dollars a week."

"Now, I don't think that's too practical. At that rate, it would take you over 150 years to pay back the $40,000, and I don't think you have that much time. Do you?"

"No, sir."

"Senator Talmidge sniffled."

"And the fact is that you have to be punished."

"What if all promise nevah to do it again?"

"Now, I know that you wouldn't break your word, Herman, and that's enough for me. But the problem is that many members of the Senate face re-election. You wouldn't want voters to think that we were tolerating something unethical, would you?"

"No, sir! That isn't the Ole Boys' way!"

"I'd glad you agree; but I'm afraid that we'll have to censure you."

"No! Please don't do that to me! Ah'm runnin' for re-election, and thee's goin' to be stiff opposition. The Mayor of Atlanta wants mah seat. The Governor of Georgia wants mah seat. Soon, even Jimmy Carter will want mah seat! All I ask is that you be reasonable. Ah only took the taxpayers' money. It's not as if ah did somethin' really bad."

"Oh, all right. I suppose we don't have to be extreme. We can probably get away with denouncing you."

"Thank you very much for bein' so understandin'. Oh! By the way, where is Chairman Stevenson?"

"I believe the good Senator is feeling rather ill today."