GA abuse continues

The visibility of student government at MIT was seriously undermined once again last week when the General Assembly, in one of a continuing series of politically-motivated actions, was manipulated into considering the nomination petition deadline for candidates.

Most of the GA reps might as well have been lambs being led to slaughter, at a handful of MIT's student political game played with Robert's Rules. The final vote was probably more of an indication of the representatives' growing desire to stop playing politics and start governing than a statement on the specific issue.

This corruption of the GA continues to alienate everyone — the student representatives, the student body. Rules and the guidelines for constructive action, have become set in stone in order to serve as rationalizations when trying to avoid political pressure. The use of rules either for political maneuvering or to avoid such manipulation can only aid in the current strangulation of student government as a whole.

None of the GA representatives or officers has the right to subvert the GA to achieve personal gain. This election could well destroy the GA, either through strangulation by laws or through attrition by political demobilism. If that is the outcome, we don't envy the winner.

Caps and gowns

The Coop announced last week that they would offer "an alternative resource" to "the traditional Tech cap and gown." This cryptic announcement was the result of two weeks of pressure from faculty and students for the Coop to join in the ILGWU boycott of Coret and Leonard cap and gowns. The Coop's announcement was a compromise with union representatives allowing students and faculty to decide for themselves which gown to rent. The ILGWU has declared that they will not settle for anything less than a complete boycott.

The Coop has already suffered from the media coverage of the Labor Relations Board, is an exceedingly complicated one. The case, currently before the National Labor Relations Board, both of which fund student activities, with more money at it or holding more events. Elections commissioner Steve Forman uniformly and fairly applied the election rules to all candidates. These rules included a 4pm Wednesday deadline for filing all campaign material. Any candidate misinterpreting this deadline was granted a 24 hour extension to prepare his nominating petition. Neither Hakala nor his running mate Dave Lingelbach, when informed of this extension, could manage to write down a brief statement of candidacy. After working for ten minutes, they realized they could not remember what they stood for and beyond Forman's permission to go to Gnomon Copy to retrieve their campaign literature. Forman granted this additional extension, but allowed them only twenty minutes, after their direct return, to type the statement.

Three hours later, at 8:20pm, they returned with a statement beautifully prepared in two different type faces. Hakala was the only candidate failing to meet the extended deadline. Consequently, Forman ruled that Hakala's statement would not be displayed at the Lobby 10 voting booth. In response to this decision, Hakala declared he would take the matter to the General Assembly.

A GA meeting had been scheduled for that week, but, because of spring vacation (and the associated absence of that Tuesday's issue of The Tech), no one expected it to be held. Nevertheless, Hakala called the 48-minute meeting for Thursday after his late Wednesday dispute over the nomination of the meeting appeared in the campus media. Many GA members had not been able to spend Finboard's money is not the solution. The recent actions of UAP Jonathan Hakala concerning the upcoming student elections flagrantly abused the power of his office. He failed to comply with the election rules. He was subsequently informed by the elections commissioner that the penalty for this was the barring of his picture and platform statement from the polling area. He then began procedural con-freedom which advanced his cause at the expense of student government as a whole.

Money won't cure all woes

All problems, whether national issues or MIT student concerns, are not necessarily solved by spending money on them. Certain problems are appropriately handled when funding is increased, especially if a physical restraint such as lack of facilities or equipment is involved. A large number of problems, however, cannot be reduced by just throwing money at them.

A case in point is student involvement in activities at the Institute. During last year's UUA campaign, Jon Hakala and Chuck Markham promised to help provide student activities with more Institute funds. These funds, they feared, would enable student organizations expand their activities and ease their financial burdens. The sentiment was in the right place, but events of the last year have shown that money is not the solution.

The conditions of most student activities is no different than it was a year ago: the specific operations or problems may have changed but the scope and general conditions are still the same. Yet Board and the Activities Development Board, both of which fund student groups, have more money than they have been able to allocate. While most groups would somehow use more money if they bothered to get it, these groups have found that funding is not their chief impediment — membership participation is.

Increasing fundings rarely increases membership or participation. Having more money available than activity members can use is no problem. It would be much worse to have idle members, since they would be dissatisfied and lose interest. Is it a shame more students don't want to get involved in the activities, but money just won't help.

Since the student groups have not been able to spend Finboard's money, there have been recent Undergraduate Association movements to spend the money to "improve the MIT social environment." It looks as though the same mistake — belief that money solves all problems — is being made again.

The Smith party and other similar groups have proven that extravagance is not the answer to a different social environment. Imagination, planning, and organization have been much more successful when it comes to campus social events.

This is not to say funding has no effect on how successful a party will be, however; just that spending huge sums of money on social events without making it with forethought will surely fail.

It is now election time again, and it is advisable for the candidates to learn from their experiences. As part of their campaigns, the candidates should explain exactly how they plan to improve the social climate, beyond just throwing more money at it or holding more events.

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