Looking back

Housing history repeats

Editor's Note: This year's housing shortage is unprecedented. The conditions responsible for the 1955 crunch described in The Tech articles reprinted below sound amazingly familiar.

SEPT. 17, 1955: This is the year of the big squeeze. The advent of a freshman class numbering 970 men, coupled with the continued presence of three other large classes, has forced approximately 150 upperclassmen to the drab confines of a heavily-cotted Walker gym. The class of '59 is less a freshman class numbering 970 than the largest in MIT's history.

Westgate has a waiting list of approximately 175 upperclassmen for dormitory rooms. The waiting list for dormitory rooms will probably continue through October 1 or possibly longer. As present, however, very few students are still staying in Walker.

Another factor causing the lack of space is the recent tendency to admit larger freshman classes than previously. The last of the small classes was '55, while '56 is the first of the larger classes. A small class was graduated last spring and a large class admitted this fall, and to this difference in numbers a large part of the difficulty can be traced. As Prof. Thresher put it, "It's tending to build up."

But no immediate remedy is offered. Even if the money and ground space were available, a new dormitory could not be built in a year, and much the same problem is predicted for next fall. The maintenance of Walker gym as a temporary living space was started on September 17 and will probably continue through October 1 or possibly longer. At present, however, very few students are still staying in Walker.

As the situation stands at present all freshmen will have rooms in the dormitories. The overflow of 150 is made up of transfer students and upperclassmen tardy in confirming room assignments. Frederick G. Fasset, Jr., Dean of Housing, would chance no extenuation as to what percent of the surplus would eventually find its way into the dormitories.

SEPT. 27, 1955: One hundred seventy-five upperclassmen cannot yet be accommodated in the dormitories this year. There are no indications at present that the situation will improve. A group of students, largely made up of transfers and upperclassmen whose room assignments were suspended because they did not conform, has been forced to find residence off campus or sleep on cots on the floor of Walker gymnasium.

There are several reasons for this shortage of dormitory space. For one, according to Don Fasset, "Fraternity pledging is off as compared to last year."

The Institute, although not obliged to house the entire student body, feels its first obligation to the toward the freshman class, and for this reason all freshmen are provided for. By Monday, October 3, the end of the pledge period, a few more freshmen will be pledged to fraternities and their beds in the dormitories vacated, which will provide a slight alleviation, but the general problem will remain unchanged, and there is apparently no other source of relief.

At present, there are approximately 175 upperclassmen on the waiting list for dormitory rooms. The waiting list for Westgate numbers about 150 families. Large numbers of graduate students are forced to seek residence off campus; the shortage is acute on every hand.

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The housing situation at the Graduate House is even tighter. Between 150 and 200 graduate students will accommodate. Westgate has a waiting list of approximately 150 families.

MIT fraternities have pledged 290 men. At least 40 more freshmen would have to join fraternities to ease conditions noticeably. It is estimated that before the rushing stops in two weeks, 310 freshmen will have pledged a fraternity. This is approximately the same number which pledged last year.

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