Keeping it pure

There were very few students at last Sunday's activities Midway, so I found myself with a fair amount of free time. As I ambled down the rows of booths, I looked at the representatives of the other activities. Some faces brightened as I walked by, then dropped as I kept on walking. Others didn't even bother; no doubt convinced of the futility of trying to recruit any of the 4th (top) group who showed up.

I started thinking about the involvement of non-students in the activities at the Institute. I kept an inventory of sorts as I walked down the aisles. An excerpt follows:

- **Technique**, whose president is a part-time commuting graduate student.
- WMBR, whose $10,000-plus funding from MIT is jeopardized because of insufficient student participation.
- Musical Theatre Guild, whose board approves a student-non-student "quota" for every show it produces.
- **Student Art Association**, who has more space in the Student Center than any other activity, and who would be considered to meet the ASA requirement of five students if its membership list were carefully looked at.
- **The Tech**, hobnobbed by its dependence on graduates to maintain equipment that was obsolete before they finished installing it, and where social operational is so obscure that at times they only fully understood by someone who was a freshman in 1967. There was also a time when the choice for Managing Editor was between one person who withdrew from the Institute and another who had been withdrawn for about a year, who even now still insists he'll be back in school soon.

I'm sure that **The Tech** is not the worst "offender" in this regard, but I just know the most about its history.

There are a number of reasons why a graduate or other type of non-student would want to stay around. First, working on the activities is very rewarding. You can make a great deal of money designing and producing work for organizations like LSC and The Tech. Second, a lot of the work is challenging, and therefore rewarding in its own right. It's a ego-boost to be able to do professional quality work while only paying your way. Third, there is an immediate return on the investment. The better your activities produce the better your peers look on you.

The change in this is when these people become too valuable and the organization becomes too valuable because of the fine line between a "student activity" and a professional field, years of learning are necessary before someone can get a job. The Tech is no exception; people do get paid for every show it produces. The equipment owned by some of the activities around here. In the professional field, years of learning are necessary before someone can get a job. The Tech is no exception; people do get paid for every show it produces.

I enjoy what the student activities produce here, and am constantly amazed by the consistent high quality of their efforts. My enjoyment is sadly reduced, however, by the knowledge that my classmates have often little occasion to do with it.

*Editor's note: Richard Salz was elected Editor-in-Chief for this volume of The Tech. He resigned earlier this week as he will not be a student next term.*

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Richard Salz

The Tech's

Brian J. Glass '82 - Chairman
Richard E. Salz '82 - Editor-in-Chief
Jon von Zeipel '82 - Managing Editor
Richard W. Epstein '83 - Business Manager
Stephanie L. Pollock '82 - Executive Editor

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**Cashing a chalkboard check**

It all started one Friday in January. We were sitting in the office after a staff meeting and the conversation turned to the subject of checks.

"You can write a check on anything," I said. "Just a minute," I continued, as I picked up the eraser. A few moments later, after putting the final touches on a signature in five-inch tall letters, I said, "That is a valid check. I made it out for only ten dollars, because, after all, you might cash it."

"You're putting me on," John said. "They'd never cash a blackboard.

"If you can get the bank to cash it, you can keep the ten dollars," I offered. "I'm sure he would never do it. He had been for only a hundred dollars, maybe."

I underestimated John. The next Wednesday, he announced his intention to cash the check.

"Will you help me carry it to the bank?"

I pointed out that, if I was there, there would be need for a check written on a blackboard. Leslie Kurzberg had offered to help carry it to the bank when we told her about it Friday night, and I supplied her phone number in lieu of aid. Then I left for the Cool Cash machine.

When I reached the bank, I decided to reconnoiter. Dean Rook, the Kendall Square branch manager, is a friend of mine, and I would expect he would be quite amused. When I asked for him, however, they said he wasn't in for the day. Then I knew that John and Leslie were in for a hard day.

Carrying the heavy (4 by 6') blackboard to the bank was a bit trying; it has sharp edges. However, the passerby on the way to the bank thought the check was very funny, which helped. When they got the check into the bank, the receptionist burst out laughing. However, when they got to the front of the line, the teller was not amused. She called the assistant manager. When he saw the check, he knew it was going to be one of those days.

The assistant manager tried to bluff his way out of the situation.

John went off to a pay phone to call the Better Business Bureau. The assistant manager called his superiors at the main Coolidge office in Watertown.

**Guest Column/Spencer Love**

The Better Business Bureau advised John that he had a valid draft and that he should stand by his rights. The Bank's vice president told the assistant manager that he had to cash the check. About this time, my phone rang. It was the assistant manager. He wanted to know if I knew anything about a check written on a blackboard. He was very polite. "Sure," I replied. "As far as I'm concerned, it's a perfectly valid draft.

"Well, whose blackboard is this? Yours or the Bank's?" he asked.

"Actually, it's HIS blackboard. What do you do with it between you and John?"

"You realize, of course, that we will have to impose a service charge of 57.50 (to your account) to cover special handling," he added.

"Sounds fair to me," I said, completely unperturbed.

About this time, Dean Rook showed up. He was intensely amused. He also noticed the steam coming from under the solo lar of the assistant manager, and immediately offered to take over the transaction. He had John (please turn to page 5)