Opinion

Dining: uncommonly blatant lies

Last year’s promise that Dining Service would soon be improved as recommended in the Report of the Committee on Campus Dining has proved as true as the myth that all university food services serve terrible food and charge high prices for it.

The myth, dispelled by successful dining programs at Yale University and Dartmouth College, among other universities, appears to be the basis of food service planning at MIT. Many students accepted last year’s report, with its controversial call for a return to mandatory commons, in good faith. Most realized that the otherwise impressive improvement plan was saddled only to garner support, but assumed that the promises would be kept, even if reluctantly.

A year of jawboning has proved these gung-ho promises to be outright lies. Since the Administration will have a captive audience for its meal plans in another three years, when the new plan is fully implemented, there is no reason to believe that the needed changes will ever be made if they are not made soon.

The list of suggestions which have been forgotten is long and disquieting. Common prices are up, despite a continued subsidy and promises that the mandatory system would decrease costs. While east campus students are currently subject to the “least desirable conditions” in Walker Memorial Dining Hall, renovations will undoubtedly be long in coming since a consulting firm has just been hired to study remodeling plans. The case for even grimmer at Lobdell, where no changes are contemplated.

Students are understandably upset. Critics range from an east campus committee about finding “a gram-hopper in my salad” to a former UAP’s charge that the dining program is a farce. Meanwhile, Co-ordinator of Dining and Residential Services Anitsh Wallen insists that “all is happy because many students have somehow rid themselves of points which they have no choice but to use.

Any increased socialization which comes as a benefit of mandatory commons will be achieved if the program is a failure only of freshmen. Commons should revert to being voluntary for upperclassmen, which would then force quality by creating competition with restaurants off campus. If philosophy as it is currently designed fails this test, so be it. It is ridiculous to subsidize a loser forever.

For a useful visit by the committee

The MIT Corporation Visiting Committee on Student Affairs faces a formidable task. Formulating a report on student concerns in a two-day period so close to final examinations will require conscientious effort by the Dean’s Office and students as well as the committee members.

Most of the committee is the issue raised by the self-assessment prepared by the Dean’s Office and keep an ear attuned to voiced student concerns. An examination of the recent developments in the Office of Undergraduate Support Services and the solicitation and use of student opinion, for example, could help address important problems without fatally reducing the focus on undergraduate academic support services.

Due to inadequate publicity for tonight’s meetings, there may not be overwhelming student response at the open forum. However, this prospect should not prevent the committee from probing student concerns by listening carefully to student leaders and those who do choose to air their complaints.

It is especially important that committee members recognize the potential non-representative nature of the student sample. Rather than generalize from a few outspoken individuals, members should seriously attempt to gather a wide cross-section of student concerns. The committee might even consider spending some time visiting living groups to obtain first-hand student impressions.

Through intensive, independent examination of the role of the Dean’s Office, and with the cooperation of concerned students, the Visiting Committee can truly make a valuable and timely contribution to MIT’s undergraduate environment.

Homosexuality is an acquired habit

To the Editor:

The following is my opinion and not that of any organization with which I am affiliated.

One of the few topics that recurs in letters to The Tech is that of homosexuality. Not only do I offer my opinion not yet represented in The Tech, I also sign my name to it.

I believe that nearly every adult has asked himself or herself the question “Am I gay?” I am sure they have also asked, “Should I go to college?” and “Do I plan to get married someday?” These questions are turning points, and each person has the free agency to choose their answer. Specifically, I believe that gay people are not forced into their sexual orientation by any physiological or psychological mandate.

It is my opinion that gay people are simply those who have decided to be gay, or who have allowed their minds to dwell on the possibility of being gay, and when confronted with chances, experiment with homosexuality. They get involved deeper and deeper until homosexuality becomes a habit. And like any habit, it can be broken.

I do not believe “gay people are born that way.” I believe human beings are naturally heterosexual, but that they are capable of forming the habit of thought and action which we call homosexuality. If the reader is gay, you can challenge him or her to objectively analyze their history of thought and action to see if it does not basically agree with what I have stated.

Daniel Milliron '84

Comic on religion insensitive

To the Editor:

The appearance of Geoff Baskir’s comic in your May 5th edition, which attempts to make fun of Christian evangelicals is a sad commentary on the level of sensitivity to religious issues on our campus. Mr. Baskir evidently finds religious zeal so amusing that he allows himself to turn his satirical shots on all serious Christians. I would not allow members of my own religious community to be so maligned, and I cannot ignore with indifference such a crude attempt at humor at the expense of others.

Like many members of the MIT community, I resent the unwelcome intrusion of missionaries who, motivated by love, would convert me to their unique religious postures, without granting me the integrity of my own religious experience. But creating such stereotypes as Mr. Baskir would have us laugh at hardly serves the needs of a community such as ours, which is now struggling more with midnight vandals and bigots of every stripe than with too much religion.

Come on, folks; satire is fine, but let’s temper it with human sensitivity and editorial responsibility.

Rabbi Daniel R. Shervitz
Henry Director and Jewish Chaplain

Editor’s note: The Tech regrets any offense that the comic may have caused members of the MIT community

Feedback

Letters to the Editor are written by members of the MIT community and represent the opinion of the author only. Letters should be no more than 250 words in length. Unsolicited letters will not be printed. Authors’ names will be withheld upon request.

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