Editorial

Three ways to improve R/O week

MIT's method of assigning incoming students to housing is unique among universities. Less than a week after arrival on campus, freshmen and incoming students choose their living groups, based on personal perceptions of the character, emphasis, and personalities of the various houses. It is often said that if the Institute tried to assign students to appropriate living quarters, it would take much more time and people would be much less happy. The MIT administration has discovered that by making students to choose, within certain constraints, their living groups, they usually feel they have made the "best" possible selection.

The Office of the Dean for Student Affairs can improve both the credibility and the outcome of the R/O Week experience in three significant ways. Acknowledging the virtue of being honest with students while accommodating their concerns is the only way to insure the success of the residence selection process.

First, the practice of allowing women to select multiple first choices on their housing preference forms should be discontinued. This practice serves no real purpose except to make it appear, artificially, that more MIT women receive their first choice housing preference than actually do. It is both illogical and impossible to have two first choices. Assigning permanent housing leaves too many residents dissatisfied. This practice serves no real purpose except to make it appear that the R/O week period after only three tries at assigning permanent housing leaves too many residents dissatisfied. Currently, students end up in dormitories they rated sixth on their housing preference cards, especially in years such as this, when the housing system is extremely overcrowded. This situation arises even though students continue to pledge fraternities throughout R/O, opening presumably desirable spots in the housing system. The Dean's Office should revert to its previous practice of allowing four rounds of the housing lottery, rather than making permanent assignments after the third round and using spaces that open subsequently to remove students from overcrowded rooms.

The Office should attempt to assure the ratio of incoming men to women assigned to coeducational dormitories reflects the overall composition of the freshmen class, rather than having the ratio of men to women vary between one to one and thirteen to one. The current practice of continuing to assign women to popular facilities, while not sending women to other houses, leaves some women stuck in living arrangements that include fewer women. Such a practice is not beneficial to men or women. The Dean's Office should heed the advice it offers to houses that wish to institute coeducational living when it makes housing assignments.

Adoption of these three changes would make the residence selection process of R/O more satisfying for incoming students, guarantee healthier living arrangements for dormitory residents, and might increase the credibility of the Dean's Office.

Column/Mark Templar

Do not forget Poland's plight

This week marks the second anniversary of the birth of the Solidarity Labor Union in Poland. As the situation in Poland moves off the front pages of the newspapers, it is important that we remember the events that have taken place in that troubled country.

After years of economic hardships, the oppressed Polish workers, exercising an unprecedented right to organize independent trade unions, went on strike in August of 1980, and demanded a better life for themselves and their families. Then, just a few weeks later, the Polish government signed an accord with the labor leaders, and the Solidarity Labor Union became a vibrant reality. By the year's end, ten million Poles had joined Solidarity, and it appeared that the Polish people could finally look forward to a better tomorrow.

But the future dreamed of by the Polish masses threatened the power of the regimes in Warsaw and Moscow. The aspirations represented by Solidarity clearly revealed the moral bankruptcy and economic ineffectiveness of the Communist system. As Marxist dogma was turned on its head, dictators throughout the Soviet orbit shuddered at the thought that the enslaved workers in their countries could unite and throw off their chains. Communist rulers rallied together and called for the suppression of the "counter-revolutionary" (freedom-seeking) instincts of the unarmed but hungry Polish people. After a year of high hopes for Poles, on December 13, 1981, the men in the Kremlin put their foot down and squashed the pesky Solidarity Union. Their puppet in Warsaw, General Jaruzelski, imposed martial law and arrested the leaders of the Solidarity Union. Since that time, the stagnant Polish economy has slid further into the muck, and the Polish people have gone back to silent prayer and quiet hopes for a taste of liberty.

The American media has now become bored with Poland, and the plight of the Polish people is fading from the public consciousness in our country. But it is important that we not forget Poland.

We must remember that the workers in Poland, like the freedom-fighters in Afghanistan and the men that fought in the American Revolution, have a cause that is just. When we look at the sullen peasants in Poland, the lonely rebels in Afghanistan, the enslaved people of Vietnam, and the regimented citizens of the Soviet Union, we can thank God for the freedom we enjoy in this country. We are blessed with liberty that most people can only pray for. It is good to recognize that every one is a while.