ODSA confronted by dilemma

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Some steps toward prosperity

Traditionally, the community relations problem may not be as
one-sided as it may be seen. Boston fraternity residents claim they
have long had to deal with un-
scrupulous local policies and the expansionist Boston University
polices. These tensions are not
apparent to the general MIT
community and contribute to the
complexity of the situation.

Historically, the Institute has
recognized the strength of the
MIT fraternity system and avoid-
ed the hostile relationship that was special to many college com-
puses in the 1960s. A prime
example of this strength occurred
during the late 1950's, in which
the death of an MIT pledge par-
cipating in "Hell Week" cata-
ized MIT's fraternities, through
the IFC, to confront directly the
thorny problem of fraternity haz-
dring. By instituting guidelines
which effectively eliminated
pledge training harmful to the
pledge or the "good name of the
institute," the fraternities proved
they could face the problem and
resolve the issue internally before
the atmosphere became detrimen-
tial to their relationship with the
MIT administration.

The dilemma in which the
Dean's Office now finds itself
concerns the balance between
mediating community complaints
and maintaining living group in-
dependence. Although the prob-
lem is not limited to fraternities,
their independent status virtually
precludes immediate and direct
intervention by the Institute.

Dormitory residents sign a state-
ment agreeing to follow basic reg-
ulations of the Institute House,
enabling the Dean's Office to re-
solve conflicts readily and to re-
main responsible to new students,
parents, and MIT's faculty. No
such provision exists for the fra-
naternity system.

Dean Sherwood, Associate
Dean for Student Affairs in
charge of Residence and Campus
Affairs, would like to see the
IFC agree to a code of commu-
nity standards and see individual
houses develop internal house ju-
dicial procedures. While the spirit
of such a proposal is "timely" —
that is, the absence of such a re-
ponsibility continues the con-
sequence of a complexity of conflicts
— there are sizable obstacles to
the plan. For example, the pro-
cess of legislating and enforcing
standards by the usually unsten-
nuous IFC for proper communi-
ty relations is unwieldy at best,
and, even still, the fraternity
community may be too segmen-
ted to come to an effective agree-
ment. Dean Sherwood, too, ac-
knowledges that the most fre-
nant reaction to proposing in-
ternal house judicial procedures
has been how antithetical such
policies would be to the concept of
brotherhood.

The Dean's Office is nonethe-
evertheless faced with unpopular alter-
natives. Although the Dean's Of-

Office may hesitate to impose exter-
al policies on the IFC, they may
be the least severe of actions.

Some MIT faculty and staff
have already been questioning the
wisdom of allowing freshmen to
live in fraternities, while others
and safety regulations should be
revised to meet market mecha-
nisms. These ideas recognize an
important reality: markets are not
evil, and neither is government.

These measures are not a pan-
acea. But they are part of a con-
structive path that could lead to
a healthier economy.

Back in campusland, howev-
er, the rhetoric will continue. The
elections are not far away, and
the Republicans will probably
be accused of the polls by voters
hurt by the recession. But wheth-
er wins on November 2, should
remember that our problems are
not Democratic or Republican.
They are American. And they
must be addressed by members of
both parties, working together.

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