Editorial

Only Hope is able to answer questions

Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Mary O. Hope was, for 11 years, a sympathetic ear and friendly voice who listened to and supported the students. She was particularly effective in mediating relations between the Institute and minority student groups, letting the groups know there was someone in the administration who cared about their concerns as much as they did.

The MIT administration properly refuses to explain why it dismissed Hope. The issue is one of personnel, and the administration cannot discuss personnel matters. To do so would infringe on the privacy of the individual and the Institute.

Administration sources claim a personality clash contributed to the dismissal. A personality clash, however, is insufficient cause to dismiss an employee, particularly one of Hope’s stature. MIT’s concealment of the facts surrounding the dismissal, nonetheless, cannot be construed as indicative of wrongdoing by the administration.

Dean for Student Affairs Shirley M. McBain sent Hope a letter explaining the reasons for the dismissal. The administration rightly said it cannot make that letter public. Hope has repeatedly said she would make the letter public. She has not, beyond confirming the letter questioned her administration of the MIT Black Students’ Conference on Science and Technology.

Attacks on the administration and angry demands for Hope’s reinstatement will neither uncover abuses nor restore Hope to her former post. Students condemning the administration without evidence do nothing to help Hope, the administration, or the students themselves. Until Hope makes a copy of the letter-public, protest over the dismissal will remain unjustified, or the students themselves. Until Hope makes a copy of the letter-public, protest over the dismissal will remain unjustified. The administration cannot discuss personnel matters. To do so would infringe on the privacy of the individual and the Institute.

Robert E. Malichman

Letter from the editor

This is a story about obscenity. Once upon a time, there was a world-famous institute of technology. The students there wanted to get things done, but there were so many of them, they did not have enough time or space to meet together. So they elected representatives to go in their place to get things done.

Another group of students decided there should be a way, other than the representatives themselves, for the students to find out what the representatives were doing. They decided to start a newspaper that would inform the students about things that happened at the institute of technology and elsewhere. Another group of students thought there should be movies of general interest to themselves and other students. One of the genres the committee decided to show was pornography. Many of the students liked to see pornography. Many of the students did not like pornography. Some did not like pornography so much, they wanted to keep the students who did not like it to see it.

Things were okay, because everyone was happy, except for the students who wanted to censorship the pornography. Thus the representatives got into the act. The representatives thought to themselves, “Okay, we want to know what people think about pornography — not that we could do anything with that knowledge except try to talk it about among our selves.” So the representatives decided to hold a referendum.

The newspaper thought the referendum was a bad idea. The representatives should not be wasting their time on something they could do nothing about, the newspaper reasoned, when so many other important things needed to be done. So the newspaper’s editorial board wrote an editorial saying what it thought about the referendum.

Some of the representatives did not like the editorial. They did not like their idea being called “bad.” So two of them, James and Ishai, wrote an obscurity to the editorial board and enclosed a copy of the editorial to indicate what issue they did not like.

The letter showed poor judgment, an inability to communicate the English language to communicate their ideas, and something about the authors’ characters. The editor of the newspaper thought about the letter. “If these were ordinary students,” he reasoned, “I would let them have their say to the editorial board and throw the letter away. But these two are the elected representatives of the students. It is important for their constituents to know these two express their disagreement by using obscene invective.

So the editor told a writer to write a fair and balanced story relating the facts and permitting the two to explain what they did and why. The editor also said he felt about what the letter. When the story came out, some people thought the editor had been unfair by using a story written on something that involved the newspaper.

If the two representatives had come to the newspaper and punished the editor, or anyone for that matter, no one would have complained if the newspaper ran a story about it. If the two had sent the obscurity to another student or group, it would also have been a story.

How an elected representative conducts his life is something the students, or the public, has a right to know. That is why former Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz got into trouble for making a racist joke, and why former US representative Wayne Hays got in trouble for committing adultery with a stripper.

James and Ishai, elected representatives and authors of a referendum on pornography, wrote an obscenity to the editorial board of the newspaper. That is news, happy ever after.

Robert E. Malichman