Column/Julian West

Vegetarian courses should be available

Yesterday's campus canteens offered a vegetarian entree in addition to the usual meal choices. Otherwise, patrons of Lobladd and Walker might never have known that Thursday, March 19, had been designated a "meatless day" by the Farm Animal Reform Movement.

The goal of the day was to spread information about how healthful, easy and enjoyable a vegetarian diet can be. Adventurous diners who ordered the excellent stuffed bell peppers might have been pleasantly surprised to see such a variety.

May even consider experimenting with a vegetarian diet some or all of the time.

They should know that vegetarians, in addition to the benefits to the individual, is beneficial to all people and animals. The average North American is responsible for the deaths of several sheep, a dozen cows, 30 pigs and 1,000 chickens. These deaths are made acceptable by distance; most people are never made aware of the dietary choices which exist in feed lots.

Far worse than the exploitation of inanimate objects, however, is the effect which a meat-based culture has on world resources. It requires 15 pounds of grains to produce one pound of beef. Simply by switching to a vegetarian diet, we would be able to increase our inmoral, wasteful and unhealthy dependence on animal products.

Such social changes are not impossible. For instance, North America and Northern Europe are in the process of being freed from societies in which smoking is so universal among adults as to be seen as somehow immoral and unhygienic. We should be able to dine out or cook at home in a smoke-free environment.

We should treat AIDS with compassion. People with the AIDS virus can live longer than five years. One would find the same sort of close relationships if one looked at other companies on the divestment list. Are the protesters saying that it is only ownership of shares that matters? What about the whole relationship? The companies will ask the questions. Should we divest?

Instead of seeting on MIT as the lever to get the companies out of South Africa — a lever which is so simple that one does not even need to know the names of the companies — the protesters should think about the companies directly (remembering that even the companies are not South Africa).

But if GM is one of the companies, the stock lock holds only one of many connections between MIT and GM. If institutions can be friends, they are old friends. The Sloan School was endorsed by an MIT engineer who helped to make General Motors a great company. There is also the tie of the Sloan Automotive Lab. General Motors provides funds for research at the Sloan School and in engineering, and there are undoubtedly students who have assistance paid for out of these funds. Graduate students have GM scholarships and still others are on GM employees. Large numbers of alumni work at GM and many students hope to work there.

We should treat AIDS cases with compassion.

According to the Harvard Medical School Health Letter, "For every person in the United States who has AIDS or one of the related conditions, there are 40 to 50 people who are carrying the virus but do not know it. People with the AIDS virus can live longer than five years. Presently there is no cure or vaccine."