Opinion

Column/Simson L. Garfinkel

MIT load taxes fresh

When I was in sixth grade my father brought home a report card with three As and one A-minus. I was so excited that I was advocating my father to want to know what I was going to do for the following ac-

term. Since then the A-plus has an asterisk in front of it. My father's words hurt me.

The following semester I brought home a report card with three A-pluses and an F. Rather than face my father which I did again, I ran away from home. That hurt my father a lot.

Probably every MIT student has shared a similar experience: that's why we are here. At some point in the past, most of us learned that it isn't acceptable to aim for second best. While such attitudes get one into MIT, they cause much pain along the way.

There are many ways of students to get into MIT. Poor grades, failed romances, bad health, the economy and heartbreak are just the beginning. Problems in adjusting to demands of the academic pace are complicated by problems of adapting to the new social environment. Most incoming stu-
dents don't realize that a different set of rules for evaluating performance must apply at a school where nearly everybody graduated first in their high school class. It's a dangerous trap to believe otherwise.

One particularly many charac-
ters in this story is that freshmen are the most susceptible to being hurt; most of the rest of us have grown cautious and cal-

culated in our years. Without knowing what to expect, fresh-

dmen often have attitudes vulnerable and compound their problems before solving them.

Three weeks into the term, a

many freshmen are beginning to feel that doing anything "politi-
cal" is meaningless. They have anticipated, with some anticipa-
tion, that their grades and career opportunities were dependent on the A-minus earned in calculus. It is much to expect out of people who measure up to MIT's rigid academic standards. Many freshmen are handling the work load with imposed defense mechanisms for dealing with the hurdle of the first year.