EDITORIAL

Let them stay

For college students, few issues become as heated and emotional as war. Months before the initiation of Operation Desert Storm, student groups had indicated their intention to mobilize and protest. It came as no surprise to us when the MIT Initiative for Peace in the Middle East established its peace center on the third floor of the Stratton Student Center.

Since classes resumed this month, some students have been complaining to the Undergraduate Association and Campus Activities Office about the peace center, which has no official permission to remain in the third floor lounge. Some feel "harassed," others, including the MIT Republican Club, believe the Initiative for Peace is receiving "special treatment." In addition, groups holding events in rooms on the third floor are concerned about their ability to use the lounge as a reception area.

The peace center should be allowed to stay, but the third floor lounge area should be made available to student groups desiring to provide information and opinions on the war. True, the peace center has its "special circumstances." The third floor lounge area, both visible and easily occupied, could be considered as a "special area" for concerned groups to disseminate information on the war.

Those who feel that the Initiative for Peace is receiving special treatment are primarily members of other student groups, including groups whose political views differ from those of the Initiative. To those groups that are not concerned with the war, we ask that they bear with the special circumstances. As for the groups that do desire space to promote their views, they should be allowed some of the space that the Initiative currently occupies.

Finally, the concern that the peace center interferes with groups holding events in Twenty chimney and the Mezzanine Lounge can largely be resolved through negotiation. When members of Students for the Exploration of Ion and Development were concerned about the presence of the peace center during a recent conference they held on the third floor, they voiced their concerns to members of the Initiative, and reached a compromise.

One solution that the UA Executive Board will likely promote is the creation of a new UA Council meeting is to ask the peace center to move to the first level, which is supposed to be for student groups. However, placing the peace center in the third floor would limit its ability to collect information, as it would have to pick up and leave every night. In its current state, the peace center is large and immobile.

The MIT Initiative for Peace in the Middle East, while not necessarily a large or popular group, has put a great deal of effort into the peace center. Its work should not be squashed by relatively unimportant space rules.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Students ignored in dean choice

(Editor's Note: The Tech received a copy of this letter addressed to Professor Mark S. Wrighton.)

I am writing to express my concern over the appointment of Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Arthur C. Smith as the dean for student affairs. Although I know nothing about Smith's suitability for the position, I am upset by the way he was chosen.

The fact that I know nothing about Smith's suitability is a symptom of the poor process that was employed in choosing groups of people with no expertise on the subject. No student input was taken on this issue, and no other candidates were considered and no attempt was made to involve the MIT community in the decision.

Although the Undergraduate Association had an understanding with you that students would definitely be on the committee that chose the dean for student affairs, this committee was never formed, and so by necessity no student members were appointed. You claim that student input has been "reconciled in the level of enthusiasm" that has been heard for Smith. However, even if it is true that Smith has been receiving positive comments, these are not an adequate substitute for the input of representatives on a committee.

Representatives can canvass student opinion and represent it in a responsible way. Furthermore, no other candidates were discussed, or at least not by a search committee (to which there is no mention). Sue me or our there might have been greater praise from students for some other choice. It is shameful that a dean who will so profoundly affect student life at MIT was appointed single-handedly by an administrator and without the advice of a committee that includes students.

David Hogg '92

Disent

Make them move

The "Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Center" should not be allowed to occupy the third floor balcony of the student center. The presence of the peace center makes students on many sides of the war issue feel uncomfortable. Dividing the space up and allowing any group to set up tables on the third floor lounge not only solves the problem. Students should be able to spend time in the lounge without being bombarded with opinions.

Since the war is a special circumstance, groups should be allowed to post on the east and west walls, since posters are less oppressive than people. If the peace center wants their opinion on you. A space should be allotted on the campus where students can get information concerning the war. All that is needed is a table and possibly a bulletin board. The MIT Initiative for Peace in the Middle East, which runs the peace center, has done a good job of compiling stories and posters from various sources, including newspapers from the region. Their Initiative's information should be made available to the students, but they should not have a monopoly on any public lounge space.

One alternative solution would be to allow the Initiative for Peace and any other concerned groups to set up a table and bulletin board on the first floor. Members of the Undergraduate Association have noted that this area, which is currently dominated by local vendors, was originally intended to support student activities.

Another solution would be to have the Institute run a true information center, where MIT could make available any literature which groups on either side of the issue wish to donate. If the true mission of the groups is to disseminate information, then this solution would satisfy all concerned.

The Student Center should be for all students. One or two groups should not be allowed to take over an entire floor and alienate the rest of the student body. These groups should be treated just as any politically active group and be required to obtain space through the usual channels.

Luis E. Eaton
Bill Jackson

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