Editorial

Congratulations, Louisiana

The voters of Louisiana did the right thing Saturday when they re-elected Edwin Edwards as governor. In doing so, Louisiana sent a strong message to the nation that former Klanman David Duke is not to be trusted. Duke’s threat has not been eliminated, however. He remains a white extremist, and many predict he will continue to seek higher office. If Duke had won the governor’s seat, he could have used it as a springboard to Washington — and ultimately to the White House.

Duke is deceiving. He is a smooth, skilled orator, and his words sound similar to many conservative Republicans. But between the lines, his bash of his past member of the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi party shows through.

While Edwards is hardly a deserving winner, allegations of corruption have followed him throughout his career — the voters of Louisiana deserve to be congratulated for voting in record numbers against what Duke represents, for voting “no” to bigotry and hatred.

Give Frosh Time to Decide

Column by Matthew H. Hersch

When I was a freshman, I questioned the wisdom of our current residence selection system. Most people told me that one way or another, I would wind up in a living arrangement that was right for me. Residence/Orientation Week didn’t leave me for dead. On the contrary, I accepted a bid from my first choice fraternity, and spent a term realizing the hard way that fraternity life didn’t offer anything I could not find elsewhere. At the same time I discovered how brutally random fraternity rush was and often frustratingly misguiding the system was so fractured.

The brothers told me, a new pledge, how socially isolated I would be without the fraternities. How important it was that I avoid social contact with non-fraternity people and how close my pledge brothers and I were to be cast aside for our inability to remember songs, slogans and useless facts. I was right not to believe them.

When I decided to leave the fraternity for good, I learned that moving from a fraternity to the dormitory system is unbelievably easy, and that the housing office possessed information that could have made many of my difficult decisions much easier.

I harbor no bitterness against the brothers. They honestly believed they were welcoming me into their club the best way they could. I do not scorn my fraternity pledge brothers for not acting as I did, and I congratulate them on former pledge brothers for not acting as I did.

The housing office told me only after I had already received a letter from the Institute during my pre-frosh summer that the housing office possessed information that could have made many of my difficult decisions much easier. I was right not to believe them.

I do, however, blame the Institute for not giving freshmen all the information they need. While I received a letter from the Institute during my pre-frosh summer urging me to consider independent living groups, I received no letter concerning the housing office before I had already learned of the existence of the housing office. I learned of the existence of the housing office only after I had already received a letter from the Institute during my pre-frosh summer. While fraternity bombarded me with pamphlets and full-color brochures, dormitory advertising was restricted to a one-time mass mailing after all the ILG material went out.

When I became an R/O counselor the following year, a maste of regulations I still don’t understand prevented me from discussing the differences between ILGs and dormitories. I could only directly confide freshmen to another person, a housing office representative or a fraternity president, none of whom could tell them the real story.

The Institute told counselores that freshmen were stupid and easily misled, and that it was better to tell them nothing at all than risk swaying them with personal bias. Every counselor — from the chief, through the veterans, down to the rookies like me — was restricted by harassment regulations. In spite of this, we tried desperately to teach. But we could for the freshmen. I saw many freshmen wander off into rush that wound up not being among them. I was a counselor, but I could not help them.

I, and many of the freshmen I tried to advise, eventually wound up living in the right place. The people who told me that first-week ILG rush was better were correct; they just didn’t tell me the whole story. That was the first flaw in the whole R/O system.

When I questioned the residence selection system, I heard the same answer — that ILGs were short, on space, and needed. That led MIT to push ILGs excessively, tough. But if MIT builds a new dorm (as it is currently planning to do), this excuse for keeping R/O for the way it is will end. We can then answer the nagging question: R/O works well for many people, but is it the best, or even too good, to offer a way to escape from the MIT'sent system? I do, however, blame the Institute for not giving freshmen all the information they need. While I received a letter from the Institute during my pre-frosh summer urging me to consider independent living groups, I received no letter concerning the housing office before I had already learned of the existence of the housing office. I learned of the existence of the housing office only after I had already received a letter from the Institute during my pre-frosh summer. While fraternity bombarded me with pamphlets and full-color brochures, dormitory advertising was restricted to a one-time mass mailing after all the ILG material went out.

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