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Chairman, 1A Housing & R/O Committee

Letters to the Editor

Tech Article Insensitive

The Tech demonstrates both shoddy journalistic practice and callous indifference to sexual harassment victims with its front page article regarding the accusations of sexual harassment and discrimination brought by Marita E. Erulkar SM '92 against Professor Gabriel B. Biran ("Jury Rules for MIT in Harassment Suit, Nov. 6").

First, the sub-headline of the article states: "Biran Did Not Sexually Harass." Similar to the judgment of Erulkar's suit, the jury's ruling indicates that the defendant's guilt does not mean the harassment did not occur. In the trial, Biran admitted openly that he had instructed Erulkar on three occasions, and that on each and every one of those occasions he had strongly objected to his actions. Erulkar told him that his behavior was unwelcome and harassing, yet he continued in spite of this. In his defense during the trial, the professor stated that he could not control his impulses and eventually "suggested" that Erulkar find work elsewhere. By both MIT policy and EEOC guidelines, Biran did indeed sexually harass Erulkar.

Biran once noticed in the discussion about Judge Elizabeth Butter's jury instructions, the date of the 1987 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling in College-Town v. MCAD was conventionally omitted, though that date is an important factor with regard to the SJC ruling from 1988, was included. While Butter does have discretion in instructing the jury, it is finding that she chose the earlier wording, requiring "severe and pervasive" conduct, rather than the language of the more recent case, which stands sufficient to clarify that reasonable, intimidating, or sexually offensive environment provides grounds for the plaintiff to recover in a sexual harassment suit.

I suggest that the entire Tech staff would benefit from one of the finely available "sensitivitv" training sessions in sexual harassment. While those training sessions afford an insight to vicvices of harassment, the staff's attendance might provide the insights they are obviously lacking.

Mary E. Hendris G

Editor's note: The Tech stands by its interpretation of the jury's ruling.

Students Must Help Solve Campus Problems

"It is commendable that Michael K. Chung [93] addressed the club members concerning the above problem in "A Wish List of Ideas for Changes on Campus." Nov. 14. What would be even more commendable is for him to take action. Everyone I've met at MIT has at least one complaint, yet most everyone else feels that it is someone else's job to change MIT. Well, I've got news for you: it's your job, and your job, and everyone else's job.

The second half of the column was devoted to problems Chung has with MIT's food service. If Chung feels so strongly about it (or any other undergraduate student) can join the I.A. Committee on Food Services. There are also committees on the Course Evaluation Guide, elections, housing and Residence/ Orientation. Elections can support educational policy and student life. All these committees still have some open seats on them and are open to any undergraduate. And if a problem is not addressed by these committees an ad hoc committee can be created to deal with it.

The UA is often considered ineffective because it has not been able to solve the problems on campus. But when students elect UAC members who don't care, there is no doubt the UA will remain weak.

Overruling seems to be a serious problem this year, yet there are only six people on the UA Housing & R/O Committee (most of whom were required to be on a committee because they were council members). I cannot believe that only six people out of 4,500 really care about overruling; but the actions of the students say otherwise.

Any government body, be it council, committee, or otherwise, is only as good as its members. While it is not fair to ask a student taking an interest in the problems of MIT, it would be nice if he were to take action to solve them.

Mark A. Herrsch '95
Chairman, 1A Housing & R/O Committee

Letters, marked as such and printed in a distinctive font, are the opinions of the author, not necessarily that of the newspaper.

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