By Eric Richard

In an effort to satisfy ever-growing student complaints while trying to turn a profit, ARA had a short-lived contract with Kowloon Chinese restaurant located on the second floor of Ross Hall and later moved to a location in the residence hall of the dining common area. However, students soon complained about Kowloon's low-cost and high prices. "It's too expensive for my meal card," said one resident.

Kowloon was chosen over its closest competitor, At's Kitchen, because of its value and selection, according to Alan Leo, general manager of MIT Food Services. The agreement was similar to the one MIT Food Services had with Domino's Pizza. However, students soon complained about Kowloon's low-cost and high prices. "It's too expensive for my meal card," said one resident.

In addition, both the Undergraduate Association and MIT Food Services voiced their disagreement. The student press grouped their support for the student life fee.

Committee makes recommendations

In a flurry of activity during April, the House Dining Committee made four separate proposals which would have drastically affected student meal plans, but finally decided to stay with the status quo. In an attempt to curb the $500,000 losses incurred annually by the dormitory dining hall, Baker House, MacGregor House, McCormick Hall, and Next House — to pay an annual flat fee of $1,300 to house members of the House Dining Committee. As members, they would be able to buy food from the dormitory dining halls at 35 percent of their retail value. "You pop something up fast and get the benefits for the rest of the year. It is much better than any other alternative," said William B. Watson, chair of the committee.

However, less than four days later, strong student criticism of the original proposal resulted in the committee submitting a new plan which called for a campus-wide fee of under $100. Residents of dormitories with dining halls would pay an additional fee to come to the cafeteria and receive a 5 percent discount, as in the original plan.

Watson claimed that the original plan was based on a bad interpretation of data collected in a survey earlier that year. "I thought, looking at the survey, that the system we set up was a reasonable one, but it turns out there is a significant number of people that don't spend that amount of money in the dining hall.

This second plan enraged students off campus who said they should not have to pay for the dining halls. "We have our food programs, as most ILG's do," said Erik J. Abernathy '93, president of Bemidji State University. "I was that it was unfair for the residents of two houses [with dining halls] to be stuck with the burden.... I don't know if there is any huge dissent, but there was a bit of confusion."

Finally, by April 17, the committee recommended that the Institute maintain the status quo until the campus dining situation could be fully evaluated. "The concept of some kind of membership fee for dining service is pretty much off the board now. The committee was unanimous about recommending the house dining fee, and I think the committee thought it was hopeless that we didn't try that that wasn't a good idea," Watson explained.

Renovations in Lobdell and Mors Hall

During the summer, ARA negotiated with Burger King to bring a "BK Expressway" restaurant to Mors Hall in addition to Lobdell Court, and renovated Mors Hall in Walker Memorial. Burger King's "BK Expressway" replaced Leghorn's in Lobdell and another addition makes Lobdell "more of a food court — like it was supposed to be," said Lauren Calabresi, magazine of Housing and Food Services.

"It's what the students want," Leo added. ARA considered contract with national chains including Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken before deciding on Burger King. MIT's franchise is one of a few under a new agreement between ARA and nationally-known companies like Burger King.

Committee of with other ARA outlets on campus, MIT receives a 5 percent commission on all purchases. Leo refused to say what commission Burger King's national corporation was asking from ARA, but said that franchises are generally paid between 6 and 10 percent.

Mors Hall was closed all summer for renovations as the serving area was altered to accommodate a Pizza Hut, similar to that in Networks, as well as a new section called Changing Scenes. The cafeteria also added a stir-fry section.

By Brian Rosenberg

Last year's Undergraduate Association effort to gather opinions on a student life fee died dispassionately when less than 420 students cast their votes over two days of voting. After this result, Provost Mark J. Lee '93 and Student Body President Katherine A. Bergeron '93, were that it was "made for a tough time, given the low turnout."

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