Opinion

Keep Next House’s Cafeteria Open

Food Service Director Lawrence E. Maguire’s recent suggestion to resolve the campus dining problem is a refreshing move towards more truly voluntary dining at MIT. Not only would the proposed system eliminate the ill-conceived mandatory meal plan system proposed in January, it would also bring about several winded-utilized and non-essential house cafeterias.

Unfortunately, the sole dining hall that would remain in service under the plan — the dining hall at Baker House — is not the one that would best meet the demands of the entire undergraduate community. If only one dining hall can remain open, it should be open in Next House.

Next House’s cafeteria is convenient for a large number of students; it serves Next, New House, and MacGregor House residents. Next House residents, who do not have access to the kitchens that many dormitory residents use, would be forced to walk to Baker for meals. Lodbell Court, which would remain open, would be the sole dining hall open in the neighboring community, and Maguire would be wise to spread the remaining open cafeterias across the campus as widely as possible.

In short, both the Next House and Baker cafeterias could remain open. Both do substantial business during the term, and both are highly valued by residents and non-residents alike. If the two can only remain open, either one would make for some minimal declining-balance meal plan, so be it. The meal plans fees discussed over the last year are too high, but at least two open cafeterias would be better than one.

John Hylton ‘94

Letters To The Editor

Pursuit of Truth Is the Foundation of Science

I think it is extremely important to question the foundations of Loren King’s argument in his article “Absolute Truth, Dogma- tism Antithetical to Science” [Feb. 16]. King states that “science works because no fact or belief is ever to be taken as final.” He seems to describe and historical background to justify the assertion of absolute truth. Unfortunately, his logic does not reinforce this conclusion. The appeal and drive of science is because of the scientific method of questioning all conclusions and retesting them according to emergent data. Underlying our scientific pursuit of truth is the peril in which those observations will lead us to uncover truths about the nature of the universe. King’s statement that “scientific knowledge is never absolute” is correct in that we are presently unable to fully understand scientific truths. However, such truths do exist.

None of this detracts from the truth in which our results are relative to their context and conditions. But I wonder if it is not scientific truth that is absolute in the way that King intends? In his eyes, we are all just with a stake in the scientific game. I am not saying that I agree with King’s absolutism, but it is my view that the scientific method is a true pursuit of truth.

Brian Rosenberg ’93

Russian Editor Should Stay

The Tech received a copy of this letter addressed to Isabelle de Courtivron, head of the Foreign Languages and Literatures Section.

I am writing in response to the article in last week’s issue of The Tech [“Russian Language LtC Co Part of Budget Cuts,” Feb. 16] that stated that in order to meet budgetary constraints, the Foreign Languages and Literatures Section would not be asking Elena Semeka-Paneratova to return as a lecturer at the Russian Language and Literature Section.

When I read that Professor Semeka would definitely not be returning, my heart sank. I must protest, in the strongest possible manner, this death-blow to the vivacity and integrity of the Russian section of your department.

While I understand that shrinking budgets have required sacrifice of all the departments at MIT, and that no one wants his favorite section or professor to suffer the consequences, I truly believe that removing Professor Semeka is a grave mistake. If she is not asked to return as a lecturer for the Russian section, it would not be asking Elena Semeka-Paneratova to return as a lecturer for the Russian Language and Literature section. However, Professor Semeka brings to the department both a singular first-hand experience of life under the Soviet regime and her own wonderful attitudes and style of teaching — both of which make her, in my opinion, one of the best professors I have ever had.

I cannot offer suggestions for how to replace the money that would be saved by removing Professor Semeka, and for that I am sorry. Only you can determine the best course of action based upon the merits of each facet of your department, but there must be a way to reduce your department’s budget without precipitously destroying the high quality of our section in the Institute’s finest sections. If Professor Semeka retains MIT, I will mourn for the students of Russian language and literature who follow me at this institute, for they will never know the joy that I have experienced as student.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Brian E. Dunkel ’93

Russian Language

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Letters to the editor are welcome. They must be typed, double-spaced, and addressed to The Tech, P.O. Box 29, MIT Branch, Cambridge, Mass. 02139, or by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483. Electronic submissions in plain text format may be mailed to letters@thes-tech.mit.edu. All submissions are due by 4 p.m. two days before the date of publication.

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