Food Services Closes Dining Halls, Switches to Voluntary Meal Plans

Change has been the key word in the Office of Dining and Food Services' effort to satisfy student demands while cutting expenses over the last year.

Many food service changes have occurred, the most dramatic being the switch from a mandatory dormitory meal plan to a completely voluntary food service option last fall. Also starting last semester, the MacGregor House and McCormick Hall dining halls were closed, Merri Hall at Walker Memorial's hours were shortened, and the Pritchett Snack Bar was closed down.

However, after discussion between students and administrators in October and November, it was decided that Pritchett will reopen by next fall. Initial proposals introduced by food service administrators met with protest from a concerned student body. This interaction between students and Food Services shaped the campus dining system into its current form.

Proposal strikes bad note with students

On Jan. 12, 1993, the Academic Council approved a new House Dining Plan, that was to take effect in September. Under this plan, all residents of dormitories with dining halls would be required to purchase a $1,150-a-year meal plan good for five commons-style meals per week.

According to John T. McNellis, associate director of food services, "MIT can no longer afford to operate the food service units at a loss. NRA is a profit-making organization. They don't operate in schools to lose money... If it were our decision, we would close the house dining halls. MIT has to reimburse as it does for bottom-line losses."

The plan, which required residents of Baker House, MacGregor, and McCormick, and Next to purchase five commons-style meals a week at a cost of $8.21 per meal, met with strong student disagreement.

Margaret S. Roberts '95, a MacGregor resident, said, "There aren't enough words to describe how bad it is. This is an all-girls dorm, and they just don't eat that much. Eight dollars per meal is too much. Usually I spend $5 to $6 a meal... If they implement this plan, there will be a lot of people moving. I would have to move."

MacGregor resident Wayne S. Dempsey '94 agreed. According to a survey he distributed to approximately 360 MacGregor residents, many said that they never ate $8 dollars worth of food.

Two students mentioned that at those prices, they simply could not afford to eat. "If they implement this plan, there will be a comfortable margin, in a sense, in favor of this," said Michelle A. Neben '96, a Baker resident. In the face of such strong student opposition, Food Services discarded its dining hall proposal in favor of a new plan to close the dining halls at McCormick, MacGregor, and Next and eliminate mandatory meal plans for all students.

"I am recommending that MIT move to a completely voluntary food service system on campus starting next fall," said Lawrence E. Maguire, director of housing and food services, in a memo to dormitory presidents. The Baker dining hall was selected to remain open because of its location and facilities. "It's the right place for the flow of students," Maguire said.

However, this proposal irked Next House residents who complained about accessibility to food by students living on the far west side.

"Everybody basically felt that Next House should remain open instead of Baker," said Shraddha V. Dalal '95, after a meeting at Next. She said that residents' arguments included the dormitory dining plan with food service administrators.

Many of the students at the meeting expressed outrage over the new plan. "I just wanted to be involved and show people that students aren't in favor of this," said Michelle A. Neben '96, a Baker resident.

Students enjoy their meal in the Next House Dining Hall.

March 7

Candidates for UA president and vice president face off at a debate in 6-120. Anthony R.C. Gastei '95 and Zohar Bethan '94 debated the issue of who they have not worked with the UA, which they said included most students. Hans C. Godfrey '93 and Anne S. Tann '94 focused on their combined experience working on UA projects and with administration.

March 10

Hans C. Godfrey '93 and Anne S. Tann '94 focused on the Undergraduate Association elections for president and vice president by a comfortable margin, in a contest marking the first year students could cast their votes on Athena.

March 10

The Association of Student Activities again tabled its plans to create a new space allocation policy, further delaying plans made in 1968 to reorganize the space used by student activities.

March 12

The Office of Housing and Food Services decides to keep the Next House dining hall open under its new dining system. The OFSH had originally planned to close it, only to reopen it.

March 13

Racial epithets are shouted at four black students as they walk down Amherst Alley at 3:30 a.m. The students charge that the shouts came from Phil Beta Epsilon, but an investigation by the Committee on Discipline and the Dean's Office concludes only that racial remarks were shouted and matches no conclusion about who shouted them.

March 13

Bart發表者 who have been documented are 1.2 inches of snow falls and wind gusts of up to 80 miles per hour are reported, as the Blizzard of '93 moves through the Boston area. The Blizzard causes some Athens servers to shut down and causes many activities to be canceled or postponed.