I have always looked forward to the Harvard Cooperative Society's rebate. I think of the Coop rebate as a little unexpected present, sort of like finding a dollar in your back pocket. With the outrageous prices we pay for college necessities, finding out the rebate was always a sign that we were not being overly charged. Other than the few times when I found a little extra just sort of exist- ed, it was another much-appreciated department store to wander through.

I'm not particularly sure about the Coop's history, but I guess that serving student needs when department stores were more exclusive than they are today, was something to do with. But does the department store model still serve our needs, or has the advent of consumerism notwithstanding, the Coop has for the most part ceased to serve students. It's time for MIT and Harvard to re-examine the Coop's role on campus.

The first question about the Coop rebate, or lack thereof, lends credence to the view that MIT and Harvard should scrap the existing Coop and create a new Coop with its own membership by producing rebates in the double digits. In my freshman year, the rebate just barely covered one loaf of bread.

When questioned about declining rebates, the Coop president is always apologetic, saying, "This was a tough year," to, "We're trying real hard." In short, lots of charts, graphs, and explanations of why many of the cashiers of the Coop has created a new rebate system to attract more customers. I do agree that since students, this rebate will be equivalent to or better than the usual rebate. But to measure our reaction by the rebate alone is sort of shortsighted.

So what should we do with the Coop? First of all, can we think about what the Coop is?