Coop Refund Called a Success; Students Not So Sure

by Deborah Chong

Approximately half of the MIT students who purchased textbooks for the fall term at the Coop at Kendall Square returned between Oct. 17 and 31 to take advantage of a 10 percent textbook refund offer, said Coop President Jeremiah P. Murphy.

Murphy called the refund successful, although he would not disclose exact statistics on how many people made use of the offer. More than half the students than Harvard students took advantage of this refund, he said.

The refund on textbooks was offered in place of a rebate on all general purchases, as the Coop has done in years past, Murphy said. Purchasers were required to bring textbook sales receipts with them to the Coop to take part in the refund, he said.

Murphy did not indicate whether a promotion similar to this term’s would go into effect for next term, but said that the decision would be made in December. However, he did say that Coop officials would consider it strongly because of its recent success.

While Murphy was pleased that many people took advantage of the refund — students got back a total of several hundred thousand dollars — he wondered why more people did not get involved.

Drawbacks to refund offer:

One of the students who did not go back for the refund, most other students forgot about the promotion or did not feel that it was worth looking for receipts and making the trip back to Kendall.

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positive, some students, including Janet Wang ’95, would like for the store the books [used] last year. “It’s helpful, but unless everybody knows how to add themselves to the list, it really won’t do too much good,” she said. “At least one student feels that the new service will ultimately lead to an increase in crime on campus.”

According to John Gavenonis ’96, "the fact is that by promoting all these mailing lists and other highly publicized anti-crime measures, the Campus Police are fostering a false sense of security among students. "This list will really just make things worse," Gavenonis said, "because everyone will assume that the crime rate is down." Murphy denied that the Coop had taken any such action. "The refund program was done on a small scale and did not involve the rest of the Coop," he said.

In fact, Coop employees had checked prices at other bookstores, Murphy said. "In all cases, we were selling at the same price or less before the refund," he said.

Another criticism involved the unavailability of certain books during the specified shopping period.

"We wanted to give as long a period as possible for purchasing books," Murphy said. "Certainly, by the middle of October, everyone should’ve got their books there."

Moreover, he said that the Coop was not necessarily responsible for late arrivals. "It depends on the circ-

stances," he added. "If the pro-

ducer orders the books [only] two weeks before classes start, then we can’t guarantee that they’ll be on the shelves in time."

Despite these reservations, most students who did get their refund were generally satisfied.

"It’s better than getting nothing, like we did last year," said Michael Y. Liu ’97.

Murphy said that the refund was mainly a marketing strategy aimed at getting students to return to the Coop. For this reason, refund plans set aside a full one-and-a-half months for students to purchase their textbooks, he said.

A similar promotion was enacted during the 1992 spring semester, but was less successful. At that time, Murphy said, the Coop was experimenting with the promotion and provided a shorter shopping period. The shorter timescale was at least partly responsible for that refund’s tepid success, he said.