

PGP turns RA

B. Ramamurthy talks about the "boat people" of the Institute

"Ramu, today is the first of March, not the first of April," "Just who are you trying to kid," "But why on earth..." —this is how my fellow PGP students greeted my decision to join the Institute as an RA. They thought I was perpetrating a giant hoax till I showed them the appointment letter and my acceptance. The general conclusion then was that I had tripped.

My relatives who had various visions of me joining an MNC were dumbfounded when told that I'll be going back to the Institute. "Oh! you want to add one more degree," was the most common rationalization. When told no degree would result from this work, they washed their hands off me and went away pitying my father who had expected so much only to see his hopes dashed to the ground.

However, I refused to be swayed by arguments and joined the Institute on July 2. When I asked the house-keeping department about my office space (I thought it was as easy as a student getting a room in the dorm) I was told to operate from a library carrel to begin with! In due course, I was told, I would be allotted a desk. But fortune smiled on me and I had my desk the very next day.

My colleagues in the wing would not believe that I had got my desk so fast. One of them even asked me if I had pulled the string to get a priority allocation. I was told that it was not uncommon to wait for weeks to get office space!

Now, I wanted a room to stay. When I found several rooms in the dormitories vacant, I approached the authorities concerned. But I was told that an Institute employee was not eligible to stay in the dorms. Had I been employed outside the Institute, they would be happy to oblige. When I pointed out that as an alumni of the Institute, I should get some privilege I was told "not allotting rooms to Institute employees is the Institute policy." (I was to run against this brickwall several times more).



Sketch: A.R. Mastekar

Smarting under this discrimination I went back to my office only to be asked by the wing peon, "Saheeb, aap ko aur kahin naukri nahi mili? Idar kyo aa gaye?" I had then to tell him that I came here of my own free will and that I had not joined the IIMA as the last resort. Similar questions were flung at me by different people in the Institute and soon I got tired of telling them the truth. I was now getting myself acquainted with the statusless existence of the RAs. I gradually understood their position—they were being generally viewed as intelligent machines. They could not take any independent action of their own.

The PGP students now treat me with a smile, reserved for PGP turned RA.

"What course are you assisting?" "Why don't you give me an A in the MANAC paper," etc. are questions which I face everyday. I am tired of telling people that I am involved in a project and not with any course. I am also tired of convincing my PGP pals that an RA has to put in work and that he is not paid for drinking tea at the Retreat.

I have gained a new insight after joining the Institute's "boat people." I now view people with more sympathy and I am more perceptible of their desires and ambitions. I know what it is to be in the constant grip of insecurity. If all this has enhanced my capacity to see beneath the surface and appreciate the human being within, I think the PGP has been wise in becoming an RA.

RA turns PGP

P. S. Seshadri looks at the other side of the hill

Contact first met P.G. "Kullu" Kulkarni, who has joined the PGP this year. How does Kullu, formerly a research staff in the Public Systems Group, feel as a student?

Superlative, he exclaims. Where as a research staff he could not get admission now as a student he is warmly welcomed. Unlike the other newcomers, he had no difficulty in adjusting to the demands of the programme. His research experience has not been of much help in his course work. His interview with the interview board at the time of admission was also not a nerve-racking affair since at least the faces were familiar to him.

Kullu feels that more interaction should take place between research staff

and the students. But he is not sure how this should come about. At present, it is limited to those research staff who may be working in a course.

Next on the list was Devi Singh, who has joined the FPM this year. Devi Singh, who worked in the Economics area for two years, says that he could have registered for Ph.D. but could not have found time to pursue serious studies. In his course work, research experience comes quite handy in the first term at least. Later, he is on the same plane as other students, since the students are graded on other parameters as well. He warmly welcomes the Institute's decision to let research staff register for FPM courses but hastens to add that this would prove benefi-

cial to him only if he had sufficient time. More of the demand from the faculty, less time you find for other activities.

Devi Singh feels that interaction between the students and research staff is at a low level because of the demands the programme make on them. If a course is proving tough for a student, you would find him spending more time with the research staff who is involved in that course. He feels that more interaction would help the students much but does not know like "Kullu," how this could be brought about.

Research work gave confidence to Deepinder Mohan Vithal. It also brought him in contact with many research staff who later became friends. Deepinder, who like Devi Singh, has joined the FPM this year, feels that research staff have edge over others in a research oriented course like FPM. He is now more acceptable, he feels. The faculty have a soft corner for students, he says.
