EDITORIALS

Seals Of Waste

At long last the other side is heard. Coached in histrionic, diplomatic language is a hint of the administration's defense of compulsory ROTC. "The Institute," they say, "must take into account the critical nature of the international situation, of its responsibilities to the public, and of the possible effect that a lack of program at MIT can have upon other educational institutions."

Presumably, their chief argument is the precedent Institute action would set for institutions with compulsory ROTC—and the consequent effect on the number of advanced corps students—a small number of officers. A questionable criterion, this is not, even if one is inclined to believe, as indicated in its legislation, that the basic ROTC program is one of which we have not been fully informed.

The Institute Committee is not suggesting that any action is taken at once. It recognizes the desirability of continuing the present program and substituting a new one—better fitted to serve both students and nation.

Quantity vs. Quality

The educational success or failure of ROTC directly influences the quality of the officer it produces. Attitude toward learning is as much a factor in education as ability; and it is on this count that compulsory ROTC fails as an educational instrument. Compulsory ROTC, a large corps, massed student rebel. Their refusal to cooperate, their contempt "don't care" attitude makes basic classes often little more than a watered down course in "should have been potentially interesting," and is carried into the advanced course by those students who—usually more interested in the desirability of a compulsion than in any subject itself—continue. Compulsory basic course is responsible for the "sounding through" attitude which unfortunately characterizes all MIT courses. The boy who struggles and fails not in a gross waste of time for the uninitiated student but also in a gross loss for the interested—a million man which prevents Institute graduates, from approaching their full po- tential as officers, a detriment to quality. Its abolition seems this standpoint is obviously desirable.

Elimination of compulsory ROTC would result in a reduced advanced corps student—a small number of officers. A questionable criticism, this is not, even if accepted, valid evidence in favor of the present program.

Compromise

The value of compulsory ROTC is increasing course enrollment, but it is not by itself student familiarization with the program. Such familiarization need not take two years and lead to the needless waste of some fifteen thousand man-hours each year. Furthermore, mere attendance is kept for its influence on advanced corps enrollment, then the present seniors two year program should be junked in favor of one or, at most, a two year junior advanced course. Certainly not an unreasonable compromise, this would satisfy the criteria of necessary officer quality and, with the army planning a two year common course, could easily be handled by the present setup.

Reduced compulsory ROTC would free officer time training of actual prospective officers, facilitate smaller classes, make advanced work, a ripper pace—in short, a program of study worthy of MIT's endorsement. The Institute Committee asks this responsibility," says the administration. "The students have faced them warning.