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College Relations

MIT's press arm: Public Relations

(Continued from page 4)

Queried as to why a university might feel it necessary to have such a thing as a public relations office, Wyllie explained that among other things, the President and various deans simply have no time to deal with the press on routine matters. The internal information distributing work of PR is also important, he said, since "Everyone at MIT is drowning in paper." PR, in his view, provides a specialized service that saves time for officers and faculty members (who also must often deal with the press).

Finally, PR serves as a "buffer" for administrators generally unaccustomed to speaking with the press, he contended. The last argument seems a little specious when applied to MIT's administration, who are not known for their maladroitness in front of TV cameras.

Indeed, except in routine matters, PR very rarely speaks directly for the MIT administration. Not even during the November Actions did they speak for MIT. Associate Provost Paul Gray handled that with twice-daily briefings while Howard Johnston contented himself with press releases. PR mostly issued its motto, "There is no such thing as crowd estimates," from behind its closed doors. The protest at MIT had "taken over" SACC's accusation that PR misrepresented what was happening at MIT is true, but only in part and mostly by omission, not by commission. The only glaring error that one can point to was the continuing reference to the demonstrators as "anti-war protesters," a misconception carried by most Boston newspapers, although the press soon caught on to the fact that more than war was being protested and changed their stories accordingly.

PR carried no statements issued by NAC; it assumed NAC would take care of that, with justification. PR did its job: it presented the administration's side of the story.

If blame for inaccurate press accounts must be laid anywhere, then it is upon the media themselves, not PR. If they chose to use primarily administration views in reporting the story, then they, not MIT, are guilty of bad journalism.

For one thing, both NAC and SACC issued press releases, through NAC refused to hold press conferences because it felt the press would distort whatever was said. No newspaper and certainly no TV station ever carried a statement of NAC's or SACC's position.

Television's journalistic bankruptcy was further exposed at that November 7 press conference as Kabat described how he had shown up for a TV interview the night before only to be told there would be no interview since the MIT administration had refused to send a representa-
tive! But MIT spokesmen received plenty of television exposure.

In essence, then, the blame for distorted press cannot be placed upon the Office of Public Relations. It belongs with the press. But there is a lesson to be learned here, and that is that when any group here wants its views promulgated it cannot expect PR to be its vehicle. PR's heart belongs to daddy HoJo.

HARVARD SQ UN 4-4550.

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Yellow Submarine

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BRATTLE SQ TEL 6-4226

Today through Thursday: BATTLE OF ALGIERS

BATTLE OF ALGIERS 3:10-5:30-8:00

Sunday through Thursday: DON QUIXOTE

3:10-5:30-8:00 Sat. Mat. 3:30

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MOTHER'S LONESOME COWBOY 1:45-4:45-4:45 Sat/Sun Mat. 3:45

MAE WEST -- Today--Today

"I'm No Angel" 6:45-8:45 Weds. Mat. 3:15

"She Done Him Wrong" 10:30-12:30 Sat/Sun Mat. 3:15

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