By Lee Giguere

The cause of consumer pro-
tection was discussed on
Thursday night during a forum
entitled "Defending the Con-
sumer," sponsored by the Ameri-
can Society of Mechanical En-
geers.

A three-man panel discussed the need for corporate respon-
sibility in product design before an audience of some 100 ASME
members in 18-226.

The discussion focused on several critical areas: engineering
responsibility, manufacturer's liability, and the consumer's right
to know.

Engineering responsibility
Howard Breton, Director of
Corporate Product Safety, Whit-
pool Corporation, spoke at length as the responsibility of a
design engineer for the "per-
formance, safety and reliability"
of his products. Breton argued
that the engineer can and must
take 100% responsibility. He
called for the addition of a
"product safety" personnel responsi-
bility officer to staff all manu-
ufacturing companies.

The danger, Breton said, must"exhaust every possibility
before he yields to outside influ-
ences." The engineering level is
the place "where product safety
must be controlled." Heading his
list of guidelines for product
safety and reliability was a thor-
ough understanding of the prod-
uct: its response to use, misuse
and abuse. Breton called on
the staffs of all companies to
provide training for all man-
ufacturing engineers.

Dr. Colton Warne, National
Director of Consumers' Union,
characterized the growing field
of consumer testing as "taking a
look at the world from the stand-
point of the consumer." He
explained that frequently he sees
a dichotomy in a manufacturer's
"character." The sales group,
said, is "eager to accent" the
desirable points of a product
while downgrading its faults. A
company's engineering people,
he claimed, are more likely to
look at the world from the stand-
point of the consumer. Thus, he
said, is "eager to accent" the
desirable points of a product,
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Engineers must "guard against
any slackness or complacency on
the part of their fellow engineers, at
all of them must be aware of the
fact that the consumer can and
must check every detail. He called
for a "full-time" staff of "special-
ists" to conduct consumer testing.

Mr. Richard Roy, Founder and Director of
the Paris American Academy cordially in-
vites you and your friends to a meeting at
the Hotel Sheraton-Boston, Prudential Center,
Friday, April 2 at 6:30 p.m.
He will show slides and talk on "The Summer
in France Program along with Interim Study Programs for Winter
Write for Catalogue Refreshments
Paris American Academy
9, rue des Ursulines
PARIS 5, FRANCE
PHONE: 325-35-09

By Curtis Reeves

At its March 18 meeting, the
Corporation Joint Advisory
Committee considered the ques-
tion of whether MIT needs an
ombudsman. The question of
whether the ombudsman should
be more than a middleman be
to the administration or a source of a wealth of informa-
tion for the consumer, in particular through complaint
processing. The police, he said, is "eager to accent" the
defensive points of a product while downgrading its faults.
A company's engineering people, he claimed, are more likely to
look at the world from the stand-
point of the consumer. Thus, he
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Engineer critical to consumer protection

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to know.

According to chairman
Gregory Smith, the idea was well
accepted by CJAC, and would be
referred to the administration
for further study.

Using CJAC's guidelines, the
ombudsman would be more than just
an investigator of compla-
ents. UAP Bob Schultz noted that the
Chief would also direct
people with ideas to the division
of the Institute that would best
be able to help with implementa-
tion.

The ombudsman would not
handle small complaints; wheth-
er an issue was important
to the administration for
whether or not the ombudsman
should be a "person" member or
one of the staff, what relation-
ship, if any, he would have with
the chief's office, and just how
much his job would entail.

Smith expressed concern over
drug use, as well as urging the
name of "limited authori-
ty, unlimited privileges." As an
advisor, the ombudsman would
be able to attend any committee
meeting for the purpose of brief-
ing committee members on re-
levant complaints that he has
received.

Concurrent with the creation
of the office of ombudsman, an
expansion of the information
office was suggested, CJAC
members commented on the rel-
ative uselessness of the office to
the "community." The addres-
ses to the street who wants a general knowledge of the subject. It was
thought that an excellent staff for the ombudsman, and the
source of a wealth of informa-
tion about MIT, would be a
object of the information
office, as well as urging the
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