Analysis:

By Paul Schindler

MIT's campus media seem anemic to many; two are on the verge of death. The four major media outlets are all having trouble. Are things as bad as they seem? Why? Where do ERGO, Thursday, The Tech and WTBS go from here?

Last week, there was no ERGO, no Thursday, just two issues of The Tech, issued with their clockwork Tuesday-Friday regularity in the common pattern of recent years. (WTBS was moving along with a new, expanded program schedule, on the air more hours than at any-time before. There was no perceptible format.) There was no VooDoo issued this month, no Impact: both are dead and Tech Engineering News seems to be dying. Last year's bold experiment in communications, The Dog, has brought no revolution to MIT media, as nothing like it has appeared since.

Only with Rain has there been recent growth (probably due to a realistic and infrequent publication schedule) and of course, the MIT house organ Tech Talk. But Tech Talk, unlike all the other media mentioned so far, is not student run; it has no problem with money or people.

For the other media, the picture is not so bright. Money and people are the lifeblood of a student-run, volunteer organization, and to some degree, all the media are suffering from a lack of one or the other. They are having trouble attracting and keeping new and competent people to maintain their organizations, while the struggle to obtain sufficient resources to continue construction is a problem already in the saddle.

The media have a much harder time succeeding than many other student organizations. Unlike most, they must put out a "product" continuously, on schedule, week after week (day after day for the radio stations).

For the time being, each of the four media claims to have sufficient people and sufficient resources to continue operation indefinitely. They are "going conservative" but need help to improve, or so they say.

Thursday

Thursday, which styles itself "MIT's Community Newspaper," was, at one time, just that. Founded in April of 1969, the paper served as an outlet for community members who had something to say, sans the filtering of The Tech. A former Tech staff member, Jim Smith, started the paper.

In the early days, it printed the considered opinions of community member and Institute professor, Jack Smith, and there was much to consider: the issues raised by the "research stoppage," the funding crisis, the occupation of University Hall at Harvard, and the whole question of the war.

Smith did not have a real "radical-left" slant to his politics, although he was clearly left of center. Thursday's leftward drift occurred not because of his will, but because of his lack of resistance. It was a natural development of the times; it moved where the audience was.

Smith left, and was followed by Kevin Dern, who took over. George began to reduce the "community" aspect of the paper, and started the descent into debt by a cavalier attitude toward the finances of the paper. Lonnee von Renner also edited the paper before it fell to Tim Kiorpes to carry the ball.

It was Fall of 1970, and apathy was rampant as MIT attempted to maintain its enthusiasm class in recent memory. The paper published sporadically, and Kiorpes howled to the inevitable and incredible pressures. Thursday could not run as the paper should have been run. Kiorpes resigned and went to Tech.

After December 12, 1970, it appeared that Thursday was a goner. Deeply in debt, with no one at the helm, it looked to be another casualty of the hard time interest evinced during that "apathy autumn." A call for a saver or group of savers offered by the considered opinions of community members was, at one time, just that. Founded in April of 1969, the paper served as an outlet for community members who had something to say, sans the filtering of The Tech. A former Tech staff member, Jim Smith, started the paper.

"E saw a golden opportunity" speaks of his work at the paper:

"We have lost our sense of desperation... Money is a big problem for the paper: it is in debt now, but less so than when the current management took over. Basi-

ally, the debts were inherited from people who had gone out of further debt. Replied Dern, now editor of Thursday once again:

money" issues, there is a debt of several thousand dollars outstanding, much of it already paid to the original creditors through a Loan from Flibboard. Dern denied that Thursday was "in trouble." "We make Flibboard nervous. They are afraid we will not pay back the loan. As it is back now, they haven't got it. But we're not running up more debt. As long as we want to rake it in, we just want to make enough to cover costs. Our new managing editor is reminded in short order, and we should do OK," Dern said. If Flibboard tries to kill Thursday, will the paper fight back? The question is a serious one. The paper was nearly killed last March by a Flibboard resolution designed to keep the paper out of debt. Replied Dern, "We might.

The staff of the paper has not been sitting on their hands, however. Some of the more audacious stories have included a belt drive in the lobby of Building Ten during a noon-hour rush, I heart, labeled TANSTAAFL (There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch), a Robert Heinlein catch-phrase often used by objectivists) at which donations were collected, and the circulation distribution, by editor Dern and others, of black leaflets at the 77 Mass. Ave. entrance. The response, while not overwhelming, was heartening.

"Thursday is valuable," Dern concluded. "People like it, and they read it. It gives them something to read during lectures. We want it to survive.

ERGO

ERGO proclaims itself the "closition of 'Objective Reporting." Reasoned Commentary on the MIT paper (now and at last), is only the paper on campus with an explicitly stated ideological position, and the only source of news with an "Objective" bias. ("Objectivity" as an objective as opposed to the popularly moulded by Ayn Rand which she summarized in a column for \[L.4 Times, June 17, 1962\]) "Reality exists as an objective as the facts are facts... is man's only means of perceiving the reality of the unknown knowledge, and his basic means of survival... every man is an island in himself, not the means to the ends of others... the ideal political-economic system is data, not false capitalism..."

It didn't start out all that logical; but the story of ERGO's founding is strange and seldom told. The man concerned was to be the father of ERGO, James Russell MacGregor Scott (known as Russell) who was going to do with the actual production of the paper.

You may have heard of Scott; he was the former MIT student who purchased all the rights to a parts to construct a Titan missile complex of subcontractors, on the open market. Scott is surgically a remarkable "remissness" man.

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