Duty of newspaper to criticize officials

By William Lee

Newspapers are often accused of being overly critical of the people on whom they comment. Perhaps the most frequently leveled charge against newspaper editors is that they tend to be destructive rather than constructive.

It is not the function of a newspaper to make policy or take positive actions. That is the job of government officials and other decision-makers. In the case of MIT, this role is filled by the administration, the faculty, and the leaders of student government.

When one of these groups is failing to perform its function, a newspaper has the right — indeed, the duty — to bring that fact to the attention of its readers. The publication of an editorial criticizing the behavior of a particular individual or group does not imply that the writers of that editorial feel they can do a better job than those they criticize, but only that, in the opinion of the newspaper, the individual or group is not performing responsibly to the community.

The situation can be compared to that of a music critic who gives a performer a bad review; the critic surely is not expected to be a virtuoso himself or herself in order to criticize Hefetz — he is only expected to give a fair evaluation of the performance regardless of his own personal ability. A music critic derives his standing in the artistic community from his ability to analyze and criticize others who perform functions totally different from his.

Is the editorial on this page, The Tech has attempted to be as balanced and as fair as possible in evaluating the performance of U.P. Peter Berke in light of his statements in the most recent issue of Thursday. In the course of that editorial, we have given Berke what we feel would be a constructive course of action in repair the coming of a General Assembly as a first step towards representative student government.

It is our responsibility to bring forth such suggestions when we feel they might be useful, but it is also our duty to inform the community of what actions are attainable. We do not have any idea how much of what Berke has said is genuine, but we do have the right to say that certain statements are not possible or constructive and thus not true. The question is not whether the situation can be improved, but how and who is responsible for the improvement.

It is easier to tear down than to build up. But when the building of something is undertaken, the work should not be left undone. The fact that a criticism is not favorable in the eyes of the critic does not mean that criticism is not useful. It does not affect the ability of one who edits a newspaper to bring that fact to the attention of the reader.

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Why the MIT Corporation?

By Bob Wasserman

Why is a prestigious, eastern bastion of higher learning run by a corporation? This and other questions were discussed in an open meeting with the visiting committee for student affairs and the MIT Corporation last Friday evening.

The MIT Corporation is comprised of 95 members, forty-five of whom are elected to five-year terms only, the rest being life members.

There were ten or eleven members at the meeting, including several younger members of recent graduating classes.

In the last issue of Thursday, Michael Taviss '81, and Carola Eisenberg and Ken Browning, President Jerome Wiesner, and Chancellor Gray. In that meeting, there were several students of this age, and there were students of this age, and are run)

By Rob Mitchell

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