What is the role of a free press?

By William Lasser

Following last week's editorial decrying Peter Berke's performance as Undergraduate Treasurer, I prevailed upon President and mg simultaneously preoccupied explanation of the role of a newspaper in the evaluation of public officials and their actions. The letter from Henry Gardner '79 taking me to task on one of my points.

Gardner enclosed with his letter a clipping of the column, with the following words circled: "While The Tech does not profess to have all the answers, it is our desire to be able to decide, if a particular issue comes or not. That is the role of an involved, involved and free press."

The Tech says "No, no." I challenge you to find that in any text about journalism.

Newspapers do not have this ability. "Responsibility of deciding right from wrong. The second you consider yourself capable of this you have stepped beyond the god of the print media. "Nothing is 'right' or 'wrong'. "Responsibility of deciding what is always a matter of opinion." - Mr. Gardner's point is well taken, although I originally had intended to distinguish not between 'opinions' and 'decisions' but between criticism and action. A newspaper can and should be critical of those in public service, and this editorial board might not be able to do that effectively in the public officer's shoes.

Peter Berke's letter to members of The Tech and board of directors is an example of what would happen if newspaper commentators were expected to follow through personally on complaints made against those holding positions of actual power, not power in the real sense, where they can influence public opinion, they can bring facts (or, in irresponsible action) to the attention of the community, they can side either with one side or the other. It is but by convincing others that action need be taken that they can wield any authority.

It is my fault through impulsive writing that I conveyed to Mr. Gar-
diner and presumably to others the impression that newspapers are dis-tinguished by their reverence for the ability to tell right from wrong. They do have the right and the knowledge, like any other informed group, to make a judgment, even a moral on.

one technical one "right" and "wrong." The relationship between The Tech and other newspapers, in The New York Times and American citizens, is that the press publishes its opinion, while the "right" and "wrong" are expected to form their own judgments and act on them at the ballot box or through other means available to them.

Thus, when The Tech calls for the impeachment of Peter Berke as we did last issue, we are expressing an opinion formed after serious con
cideration of the issues. We have, in a sense, differentiated a "right" from a "wrong" one. But we are not convicting ourselves with an ability which we deny to others in an informed posi
tion -- even undergraduates must make up their own minds as to whether or not. That's the role of a free press.

To the Editor:

You may be ticked off by the manner in which our UAP sug
gests that you handle convneting the GA. The General Assembly has long been of the belief that only facts of events should be published in the MIT news. This, in turn, is a result of the desire to keep public opinion, while the GA should have authority to make a judgment. The GA is, of course, an example of the spirit of the UAP. It is a fact that as of the present MIT community. Therefore, we, as a community, must also make sure that all organizations have a chance to express their opinions.

The Tech is not a mouthpiece for any one group, but a mouthpiece for the majority of students. The Tech is published without regard to whether it is in the interest of the majority or not. This is the role of a free press.

Grading report - ridiculous

The present system is bad. There are at least two problems: first, the grading system encourages employers of the value of grades as an evaluation tool for prospective employees, you should also make sure that all colleges and universities use a a broader participation. I am therefore writing to ask whether the Tech can bring facts to the public.

The Tech received a copy of the letter to the MIT Community. I am very happy to report that as of today the United Way Campaign has obtained contributions of nearly $900,000, which is 73 percent of our goal. These contributions have come, however, from only 25 percent of the Community.

We should be able to reach our goal, particularly if contributions come from in the many people who last year participated but did not do so this year. I am sure that in most cases this is a matter of oversight and I think that is the next few days those of you who plan to contribute will do so.

Since our goal this year is special, I am unable to overlook those who have not contributed. We must count upon somewhat more participation in the second week of the campaign. I am therefore writing to ask whether the Tech can bring facts to the public.

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Incidentally, you will be reading in the press that the Mass