A new volume, an old commitment to news

The nature of a university is change. Every four years brings a complete turn-over among the undergraduate population. This dynamic situation makes the achievement of a global view and the establishment of a tradition very difficult. A campus newspaper is a continuous chronicle of issues and events, even though written by individuals with only a few hours at the institution.

With this issue begins the 104th volume of The Tech. The function of this newspaper is two-fold. It is first to contribute to the chronicling of issues and events, and secondly, to provide a place where students can learn the craft of journalism: writing, editing, production, and business, and enjoy the association of fellow students in a non-academic activity.

The new editorial board affirms the commitment to which all good journalists aspire: to report the news as completely, fairly and accurately as possible; to serve as a forum for the community to voice its concerns and debate its problems; to eschew pandering to self-serving interests; and to do the best job a group of amateurs can perform.

The Tech is a part of the community of which it covers. The editorial board welcomes whatever contribution readers wish to offer, be it a comment in a letter to the editor, or a story written as new members of the staff. As the first editorial volume of 24 months eight years ago, without the confidence that the undergraduate body would lend its hearty support and cooperation, the paper can have a sphere of influence limited to its readers; with them, it can do its share to help the growth of Technology's college life and college spirit.

Opinion

General Assembly has authority over groups

If any student group is deserving of recognition for performing the necessary functions of student government, the Student Center Committee is certainly it. The committee, an experimental body, has organized a recent move of several offices and its own television room within the Student Center and funded part of the move. The committee has also provided funds for a Sigma Phi Epsilon boat cruise during Spring Weekend.

The only problem is that the Student Center Committee is not responsible for those tasks and has neither the authority nor the right to perform them. The students whom it claims to benefit, whose resources it controls, have no control over the election of the chairman of or any of the members of its oligarchy. The single representative body of the students — the only body which it elects — is the General Assembly of the Undergraduate Association. The General Assembly has the right to give permission or refuse it to perform tasks such as reorganization of student offices and funding for Spring Weekend events.

Student government is paralyzed and impotent. There are conflicting jurisdic- tions, especially within the Student Center where the General Assembly, the Association of Student Activities, the Finance Board and the Student Center Com- mittee, not to mention the morass of MIT administration interests. Yet the General Assembly, the Finance Board, and the Association of Student Activities have taken no action with regard to the funding of the recent move, and more importantly, no action with regard to its planning.

Kris C. Allison '84, president of the Association of Student Activities, said she appreciates the support of the Student Center Committee. The General As- sembly has not met in months, and its leader, Undergraduate Association Presi- dent Michael P. Witt '84, is nowhere to be found. The Finance Board has not even been asked for the recent funding.

The Student Center Committee's actions were perhaps the only way for the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs to provide a more secure office and safe for the committee. Student government can be responsive to the concerns of the MIT community and show great sensitiv- ity as it endeavors to meet the community's needs. Even though past Regis- tration Day movies have attracted more people than almost any other movie LSC has shown, the group has chosen a sensitive course of action, accepting the loss in revenue by cancelling the movie for this registration day.

The Lecture Series Committee has also agreed to establish a committee com- prised of members representing various viewpoints from both students and staff. The committee will attempt to mediate the viewpoints and arrive at a set of guidelines for acceptable sexually explicit films. Although any agreement will not be binding upon LSC, the group says it expects to abide by the compri- mises agreed to by the committee.

The proposed committee will provide a valuable service as a forum for all parties to discuss the issues relevant to sexually explicit films. The primary focus of the committee, however, will be to reach reasonable operational definitions of erotic and pornography. To attempt to define what constitutes "pornograph- ic"—or bad—films and what constitutes "erotic"—or OK—films is a futile game of semantics.

There will always be someone who believes that any kind of sexually explicit film is offensive. There will always be someone who believes such films are permissible only if they do not degrade someone, though who defines degradation and why it should only be forbidden in sexually explicit films is unclear. To describe or permit films on the basis of whether or not they offend some segment of the population, opens every film ever made to censorship.

It is a hard, unfortunate fact that anything will offend someone. No one has to see any one image in its entirety. Films can be viewed with care and with reason. Whereas it is absurd to forbid contact with any idea, attractive or repulsive, it is set a fac- tion—al minority censor above the individual, which is inimical to everything for which this country and MIT stand. 

Playing semantics with pornography is foolish

The recent decision by the Lecture Series Committee to not show its tradi- tional, sexually explicit, registration day movie demonstrates that the committee can be responsive to the concerns of the MIT community and show great sensi- tivity as it endeavors to meet the community's needs. Even though past Regis-