Smela resigns, citing McBay's handling of proposed screening

"The Committee is only a means for the Dean's Office to please people. The situation with respect to the showing of pornography at MIT has not changed," wrote Elizabeth Smela, in a formal letter of resignation as an undergraduate representative to the Ad Hoc Pornography Screening Committee.

Smela, a member of the MIT women's group Pro Femina, cited problems with LSC's decision to advertise and schedule the movie without prior review or from the committee, in its refusal to consider the guidelines suggested by the Ad Hoc Committee, and with the Dean for Student Affairs, Harold Shepherdson, who failed to notify the LSC's intention to show a sexually explicit film.

In her letter to Dean of Student Affairs Shirley McBay, dated Nov. 19, Smela wrote that, "In my meeting with you on Sept. 10...you indicated that there would be an announcement in The Tech or in some other place if LSC decided to show a pornographic film. ...Smela was not informed of LSC's intention until LSC advertised the screening Nov. 10-16 weekend.

Smela wrote that, "In order to meet the six-week screening guideline, LSC must have informed us by Nov. 2. Therefore you knew for more than two weeks that LSC would show this film before informing your staff and the Committee on Pornography of this fact on Nov. 19."

Smela concluded, "Clearly, LSC still does not understand the issues raised by concerned groups in Pro Femina and MIT Community."

Smela disagreed with the canceling of the Dec. 14 showing, saying, "Under this policy [LSC's], the right, because they followed the guidelines.

LSC, McBay addls on film policy

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McBay responded that LSC would not be allowed to use MIT facilities to show a film on that specific date on the grounds that she did not receive enough specific information from them. McBay also defended the Ad Hoc Pornography Screening Committee."The committee could not be convened in time to review the movie, which is not under the policy's guidelines," she said. The role McBay is supposed to fulfill" is to advertise and schedule the movie without prior review or from the committee, she added.

Heimann was the only person to volunteer for the position of chairman at the second and last committee meeting, on Nov. 19. McBay, at that time, suggested that the ad hoc committee member chair the committee, according to Helman.

On Nov. 23, however, McBay announced in a memorandum that she had appointed Seth as the committee's sole chairman. Heimann's actions in the participants meeting, saying, "Frankly, I'd like to see [the committee] direct their own chairman," also assented to. Heimann has no authority to convene the committee, said Helman.

McBay wrote, in her Nov. 23 letter informing LSC that MIT facilities would be unavailable for showing a sexually explicit film Dec. 14, that in the future LSC would have to send her written notification, six weeks in advance, with the following information:

- The name of the proposed film
- The date the film was reviewed
- The result of the film's review and the committee's decision regarding the film

McBay stated three reasons for her decision. One was that the committee could review the film and then decide whether to show it. She also noted that there are six weeks to prepare the film, and that LSC would be associated with McBay's actions. The third reason was that McBay has "decided not to show a film I don't like without your permission," McBay said.

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The MIT policy statement on sexually explicit films states that, "The LSC or any other group proposing to show sexually explicit films must notify the OSDA of this intent at least six weeks prior to the proposed showing date."

Huckelbery also said in the letter that, "LSC does not need McBay's approval to show a film if the committee has reviewed it positively, and does not intend to ask for it.

The MIT policy states that, "if the committee finds that a film meets the established criteria, then this film may be shown on the same date as any other film on campus."

Huckelbery also disagreed with McBay's requirement that movies must schedule a committee review six weeks before the proposed showing date. He noted that this policy states, "The committee will notify the Office of Career Services of this policy, whatever."

Huckelbery stated in the letter."

McBay wrote, in a summary of the events surrounding the controversy, "My office was notified of LSC's intent to show such a film approximately six weeks in advance by Tim Huckelbery in a telephone conversation with my secretary."

Huckelbery maintained notification of intent was only the action carrying a six-week deadline in the MIT policy statement. Huckelbery also said that LSC's scheduling the movie in 2-100 at the end of the term and its notification of the Dean's Office six weeks before the event complied with all the possible restrictions the committee could impose.