

Students Discuss Pros, Cons of ROTC

Regents Award Contracts

Editors note: This is the second article in a series on Compulsory ROTC. This article is written from the student's viewpoint as the draftee looks back on his days at the University.

By Tom Kotoue

The Texas wind is whipping a fine snow through cracks in the barrack window sills and doors. Mess rivaled Nebraska Tom turkey, dressing, seet corn and mashed spuds, but somehow it just doesn't seem like Christmas eve here at boot camp.

After my reminiscing this afternoon about ROTC program and purpose, I've been mulling over how well students think ROTC actually meets the standards set up.

Reminds me of the conversation a couple of us had in the Crib the Thursday before the Nebraska-Arizona game:

Seems that one of the fellows had hummed the Mickey Mouse Club theme song when some screwball from the Daily Nebraskan asked him what his opinion was of compulsory ROTC at Nebraska.

"Against" Column

But the fellow from the "Rag" sluffed it off, making another mark under the "against" column. He then told us that of the 167 University students he had interviewed at random that week, 112 were opposed to compulsory ROTC at the University for the first two years.

Pat, the fellow in Army ROTC sitting next to me had this to say: Compulsory ROTC has no value to the vast majority of students because of their negative attitude towards it. We can't simply sell the program on the national needs it meets, but we've got to use a Madison Avenue soft sell approach. In other words, sell me on what value a commission has over the draft, its pay, its program.

Yes, I had added, it's a good opportunity for those interested in a military career or in taking care of their obligation. If I knew I was going to be drafted, I'd go into

the advanced program. But I won't be, so that's that.

A "five-year man" in the booth next to us told us that he was a former Army ROTC basic and a current Army reservist. "You're crazy," he said, "as a college man to want to be a private for two years. The advanced program has the advantage of a commission plus eight months saved in Officer Candidate School if you qualify."

Basic Training

"As far as the training I received in basic ROTC, however," he added, "it was nice to know drill procedures and philosophies, but it could be picked up in a breeze."

A Navy contract midshipman threw in "I like it. As an officer I'll get better pay, better living quarters, and better people to work with who are same caliber and have the same ideals as I."

An advanced cadet in Army ROTC added, "It's unpleasant, but it's the best way I can fulfill my military obligation."

A transfer student from the University of Omaha said that Air Force ROTC is not compulsory there. Although most of the students take it anyway instead of physical education, few go into the advanced program. (Records show that with only one-third of the male enrollment of Nebraska, Omaha U's program turned out 23 second Lieutenants in 1957 in comparison with out 29. However, OU has no Navy or Army programs.)

Shouldn't Force

A fellow standing by argued that a student shouldn't be forced into any type of activity. "He'll be caught in the draft anyway."

Another voiced the fear that many would never join if not forced into the ROTC, but emphasized a more positive attitude through non-compulsory ROTC would not only make up for the smaller number of basics, but attract a larger number of officers of higher caliber and ability.

Quite a few fellows thought that basic ROTC was a good and easy way to get acquainted with the military establishment and structure in the USA, as well as getting a taste of military procedure.

An Air Force basic said that mandatory ROTC "is one of the stupidest things in life. A student entering the

say the content is not deep enough."

Then some one piped in, "I like the movies in Air Force ROTC. They have Walt Disney and everything." But he continued to say that the course gave the student not going into advanced ROTC "a good idea" of weapons systems and where we stand in the world.

Equal Intelligence

Of the cadet officers in Army, one student said, "I hate being directed by guys no smarter than myself."

Yet once on active duty, said Col. Sullivan, a product of ROTC usually adjusts to the new demands of responsibility and direction more rapidly than does the product of the Air Academy.

But we got into a pretty general agreement in the matter of time vs pay. An Air Force cadet said, "It's not worth it for me to put in six hours a week for four semesters in the advanced program when I could be concentrating on courses I'll never be offered again. I'll learn the same things in the Army when I'm drafted."

An Army advanced cadet pointed out that he had earned only 15c an hour in his six weeks of summer camp, making it almost impossible for him to come back to school.

Shoe Shine

A foreign student told me that he couldn't quite see a man shining his shoes for four hours before the first lab, as his roommate had.

Money is the only reason that about 25% of the fellows are in regular Naval ROTC, said one Naval midshipman. As the supper crowd started to fill the Crib, our discussion had broken up with these remarks:

From an Air Force cadet: ROTC serves this nation's defense. If defending our nation is unimportant, then so is our freedom.

From a former Army cadet: If a man is not willing to serve his country two years in basic, he does not deserve to live here or to be educated here.

And from a Navy midshipman: We all complain about some part of ROTC, but I think that most of us realize that it's a necessity with today's crucial need for leadership.

University knows whether or not he wants to go into advanced. The forced two years convince few to enter advanced and hurts the overall attitude toward the program.

Lost Aboard

But an ex-Navy man added, "An ROTC reserve doesn't know what he is doing aboard ship. He is worthless for a long time until he gets on to the routine, some of which he should have known beforehand."

An ROTC cadet on tour at a Texas Air Force base said that officers had told him that "a bigger per cent of ROTC officers fail the flying test than Academy or OCS graduates."

Cadet Col. L. W. Burry of AFOTC emphasized that ROTC gave the armed forces "an opportunity to impress and educate a man" in his formative years of college before he develops a defense against the philosophy and program of the armed forces. The ideas which a man gets in his first two years of ROTC frequently interest him in advanced training and play a part in determining what career he shall pursue."

Midshipman Capt. Harvey Hartman, battalion commander of the Nebraska NROTC unit, said that the ROTC program is "good experience in making decisions" and as "a training ground for future executives, in the armed forces or out."

Experience Valuable

"The ability to work with men which I have gained," he added, "has given me confidence and know-how which can be applied to civilian life. The ROTC program has gotten a bad name from its compulsory nature. The NROTC set-up illustrates that a non-compulsory program brings out the qualities desired in Naval officers and might be a method the other services should further explore in meeting their officer requirements."

"But the thing I object to most of all," interjected one sophomore Army cadet, "is the drill. The uniforms are a waste of the taxpayers money. And if we want to acquaint a man with how to fight, let's put the rifles back in the Army program."

A junior who had completed his basic ROTC said that we should have mandatory physical education if we really are concerned with the exercise value of drill.

An Air Force cadet added, "This year the program's set up to give the man a chance to show his leadership if he wants to. He can gain self-confidence and become more self-disciplined."

Need Basics

Then someone brought up a statement by Col. Elmer

Contracts totaling \$1,463,649 for the construction of the Eugene C. Eppley Foundation Institute for Research in Cancer and Allied Diseases on the College of Medicine campus in Omaha have been awarded by the Board of Regents.

Successful bidders and their bids were: General — A. Borschmar Sons, Omaha, \$741,773; mechanical — J. H. Martig Inc., \$549,490 and elevator — O'Keefe Elevator Co., \$53,996.

No Lab Yet

Action was deferred on the low bid of \$99,060 submitted by Laboratory Construction Co. of Kansas City for laboratory furniture. University Business Manager Carl Donaldson asked more time to study the proposal.

Construction is expected to begin in October with completion date scheduled in the spring of 1963.

The building will be located on the south side of Dewey St., between 42nd and 44th St. and opposite Clarkson Memorial Hospital.

The institute will cost approximately \$1,800,000 including equipment, architect fees and utilities connection.

Five-Story

The five-story structure is being financed by \$650,000 from a \$2.5 million grant from the Eugene C. Eppley Foundation of Omaha; \$800,000 from the U.S. Public Health Service Grant and \$350,000 from the University's College of Medicine building levy.

J. Abrahamson Heads IFC Rush

John Abrahamson, a junior in Teacher's College, has been elected chairman of the IFC rush committee for the coming year.

Abrahamson, a member of Beta Theta Pi, has been a member of the IFC rush committee and is past assistant rush chairman for his fraternity. He is also a Student Council representative from Teachers College.



Courtesy of Omaha World Herald

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