

ROTC: Pro and Con

What if they threw a war and nobody came?
—a popular poster

It may never happen, but if nobody came the world wouldn't need a reserve officer training corps, graduate flight schools, naval academies or anything to remind people that the sword stands ready behind the pen.

But as long as the freedom of expression, the right to assemble and to dissent are values worth getting excited over, then there will always be the prerequisite for an armed force to support those values and ward off the power thrusts of those few who seek total control.

The United States — as a major world power has inherently taken on the responsibility of maintaining an adequate military strength.

In order to have the best men manage the rank and file, the Armed Forces seek to develop training programs that will yield high quality officers — maybe not every time but as consistently as possible.

The best training program to date is the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) from which the services draw more than 50 per cent of their officers. It is not the best program because it has the highest yield (21,000 last year). It is not even the best program because the Pentagon says so.

It is the best program because ROTC combines quality civilian resources throughout the nation — college-trained men — with sound military training and tradition. This interplay between civilian university and military instruction is the essence of ROTC. The result is a civilian controlled citizen officer corps, not a professional, armed force.

Far from static

The ROTC program furthermore is not static. Curriculum revisions have been made continually since its inception. The fact that Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird established a special committee to consult with college faculty and administrators does not mean that the ROTC program is in for its big 20-year change this year.

Secretary Laird reiterated in June that "we are prepared to consider changes which would improve the program at individual schools. We are not prepared to see the program degraded in any way."

For the first time in almost a decade — since ROTC was openly denounced with noticeable intensity by left wing students in California — the moderates began showing interest in improving ROTC, not to the satisfaction of the campus radicals (who protest at less than 10 per cent of the colleges offering ROTC), but to the satisfaction of the entire academic community.

Hence: the Laird team to talk with administrators and speed up ROTC curriculum revitalization.

One member of that team told a Congressional investigating committee in April that "only if ROTC courses meet the same high academic standards as other courses do, should they qualify for academic credit."

Matter of credits

Fewer than 10 schools of the 350 offering ROTC do not grant credit for it. None have dropped credit entirely during the past year. The trend will be to "beef up" ROTC courses, and if such improvements do not yet satisfy the college or university, its administrators will be advised to cancel its contract as did Harvard this year.

The Pentagon — with a waiting list of more than 100 schools to acquire ROTC detachments — will not keep ROTC where it is not wanted.

When this happens, the school denies at least some of its students the opportunity to enroll in a course they choose to take. Compulsory ROTC is all but wiped out. It has become voluntary, like any other course offering.

The effect obviously has been decreased enrollment. The drop in ROTC freshman enrollments throughout the nation this fall has also been influenced by seemingly fewer hostilities in Vietnam, President Nixon's cancellation of the draft for November and December and the proposed yet unacted upon volunteer army — all of which might indicate peace in the near future.

After Vietnam

If Vietnam ends soon, the need for ROTC graduates will be reduced. Lower enrollments will not erase the value put on the program. But until a peace treaty is signed, a volunteer army is created or the draft is abolished, those who might have enrolled but didn't have still left their military commitment to chance.

A survey was conducted among the freshman Army ROTC cadets at the University to poll their reasons for enrolling in the program. Less than five per cent wrote in reply that it was the best way to avoid the draft.

Graduates

If the rest were honest in their replies, that class will graduate cadets who are interested in leading other men to the best of their civilian-military ability for at least two years. The program will have been worth it.

When somebody throws a war nowadays, a lot of people come. When the United States is invited, it goes in the interest of freedom for an oppressed people or it doesn't go at all, depending on the politics of the situation.

Until the day when nobody comes, the necessary evil of an armed force will be required. The best training programs will be needed to maintain that force. ROTC qualifies as such a program. It should be retained. It will be improved.

—Kent Cockson, Nebraskan managing editor

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ROTC is Mickey Mouse. While the terminology may make English professors wince, nothing could be more truthful. ROTC is a bunch of Mickey Mouse.

What does ROTC offer? What is in the curriculum? Veteran officers in charge use words like "leadership, opportunity, adventure, and challenge." What propaganda; what a laugh.

The first thing any ROTC student learns is to scan the shirt collars of the ROTC instructors. For if they have a shiny looking piece of metal there, they are officers. Each is a little Jesus, to be hallowed, revered and respected, and addressed only as "sir."

The student will spend much of his time learning when to say "yes sir, no sir" and worrying about what will happen if he guesses wrong.

Then there are the other important things. The ROTC shirt must be ironed a certain way. The ROTC belt buckle must be worn just so. The ROTC cap must be tilted at just the right angle.

Demerits

If a student does not learn these very important things, demerits may result. More than five demerits a semester results in a lower percentage grade for the course.

Even more important than the clothing is the brass and shoes. Classes are held to teach the ROTC student to polish the brass properly, and spit shine the shoes in the military way. Failure to learn these very important things results in more demerits.

Then there is the "leadership laboratory," also known as an hour of marching each week. This represents the most detestable characteristic of ROTC and the military — authoritarianism.

Trained Animals

ROTC students march around the campus much like trained animals, blindly following the commands of their "leaders." Repulsive is the only way to describe it.

Colleges and universities exist to encourage an individual to think and understand for himself. Yet ROTC students must bow to and accept authoritarianism — exactly the opposite of everything college stands for.

After all this, the curriculum may allow a little time for studying former army battles, or learning about a military map, or perhaps gaining a few bits of knowledge about the Department of Defense.

Even worse than the degradation and Mickey Mouse that a student faces during his four years of training is what ROTC really stands for.

Despite the shiny shoes, the snazzy uniforms and the impressive bearing of students and officers, ROTC is training men to fight in a forlorn, worthless patch of jungle where the majority of the inhabitants would rather not see Americans.

ROTC trains men to fight, not for their country, but for a military-industrial establishment that delights in making millions of dollars while hundreds of young men lose their lives weekly fighting a war that cannot and will not be won.

In theory, ROTC trains men to defend a democratic, free and progressive society. In reality, however, they are enslaved in an undemocratic, unfree and unprogressive society.

It cannot be denied that ROTC ultimately trains men to burn, pillage, torture, maim, gas and kill.

See the Light

Fortunately, many students and colleges are beginning to see the light. ROTC enrollment is down drastically at NU and throughout the country. Harvard and Dartmouth are the first colleges to throw ROTC off the campus. They're the first — and they're ahead of their time — but they won't be the last.

The time will come, not this year or next year, but soon, when ROTC will be gone from every university in the United States. And then ROTC on campus, and every ugly thing it stands for, will become only a sick memory.

—John Dvorak, Nebraskan staff writer

Spock phenomenon

Yesterday afternoon in the Nebraska Union I witnessed one of the most amazing spectacles I have seen during four years at this university. More than 1,700 students gathered for a speech by Dr. Benjamin Spock. The Centennial Room, with a seating capacity of 1,000, packed to the walls and through the doors with additional hundreds, was only part of the story. About 600 people sat in complete silence in the main lounge, listening intently.

A turnout of this kind was seen and was to be expected for Robert Kennedy or Eugene McCarthy.

But for Dr. Spock? Dr. Spock, a public figure without a public character in the minds of most of us, long known for his ideas on child rearing and most recently a major figure in attempts to spark official challenges of the Vietnam war through the judicial system of the United States, a crowd of this size on this campus is unparalleled.

This should prove an awakening for those students who often have dismissed failures to spark mass support for reform on our campus with the cliché "students are apathetic." It may be a portent of the year just begun. Students obviously are not apathetic on the war, a question that seems important to them and to their world. The movers and shakers will have to prove to these students that a cause is worth moving and shaking for.

Holly Rosenberger, editorial page assistant

Letter policy

To have letters to the editor printed in the paper, readers will be asked to follow several rules:

—Signed with the writers full name. A pen name or initials will be used upon request. Any student, faculty member or administrator may obtain the name of a person writing under a pen name or initials if he submits a request in writing to the editor.

—Typed, double spaced.

—Addressed to Editor, 24 Nebraska Union, or brought to the office.

—The editor reserves the right to edit letters submitted.

Nebraskan editorials

Domestic dissenters on Vietnam think Nixon's had enough time

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Washington — A private conversation last week in the White House between Dr. Henry Kissinger, the President's foreign policy adviser, and two Republican Congressmen shows how President Nixon is losing the crucial battle for time in his effort to wind down the Vietnam war.

Kissinger's purpose was to persuade Reps. Donald Riegle of Michigan and Pete McCloskey of California not to introduce their formal proposal to repeal the Tonkin Gulf resolution effective Dec. 31, 1970 — in effect, a 15-month deadline to end the undeclared war.

The two youthful Republicans, who have kept the White House informed of their plans, hope their resolution will persuade Mr. Nixon to accelerate Vietnamization of the war and withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Neither Congressman would reveal to us details of their 45-minute talk with Kissinger on Sept. 16. From Administration sources, however, we learned Kissinger invited them to the White House to make the appeal.

Every political move that gives Hanoi fresh evidence of rising anti-war fever in the U.S. is one more nail in the coffin of the President's plan to compel or persuade Hanoi to negotiate an end to the war.

Appeal for time

Kissinger was appealing for time, the most precious commodity left to Mr. Nixon in his attempt to wind down the war fast enough to satisfy his critics but not so fast that Hanoi will feel no pressure to negotiate.

The Riegle-McCloskey resolution would do just the opposite. It would show Hanoi that two middle-of-the-road Republicans, close to the younger generation, were trying to strip the President of his only statutory authority for waging the war — the Tonkin Bay resolution overwhelmingly passed by Congress in August, 1964, at President Johnson's request.

Kissinger's low-key appeal to the two Republicans failed. They respectfully informed him they would not change their plan. The resolution will be introduced within ten days.

Here is no isolated incident. This unsuccessful effort by Kissinger is of a piece with similar approaches by other high Administration officials to defuse the anti-war movement in a desperate play for the all-important element of time.

President Nixon is convinced that if just two

leading war critics — Sen. J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana — gave the Administration a six-month moratorium on all war criticism, the impact on Hanoi could be decisive. That is, the Communists would read into such a political shift a warning that Mr. Nixon's troop withdrawal policy had taken the cutting edge off dissent at home.

No grace period

But neither Fulbright nor Mansfield has the slightest intention of giving the President a grace period. To the contrary, the war critics are getting ready to escalate their campaign this fall.

Thus, many Congressmen will personally take part in the massive anti-war demonstration set for Oct. 15.

A move is now underfoot in the House, for example, for a bipartisan delegation of Congressmen to attend a brief vigil at Arlington National Cemetery that day. Likewise, Rep. Allard Lowenstein of New York, the Democrat who lit the fuse in the 1967 dump-Johnson movement, will speak on at least two campuses Oct. 15 in support of the movement.

What this means is that the diligent efforts of the Administration to buy time with troop withdrawals and with cancellation of draft calls for November and December have fallen far short of the goal.

As McCloskey told us: "I don't think the draft reduction is going to fool anyone. It is simply an effort to buy time."

Yet, the President has few remaining options. He has ruled out escalation. Nor will he "bug out" of the war on terms that would humiliate the U.S.

Further complicating the President's position is the pressure for caution in troop withdrawals from the uniformed military, from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, and from career Foreign Service diplomats (led by Under Secretary Alexis Johnson).

But to follow their advice is to travel the political route of Lyndon B. Johnson. Thus, with no less a power in the Administration than Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird strongly counseling faster withdrawals and with Republicans such as Riegle and McCloskey increasingly restive, the President has little choice but to increase the pace of troop withdrawals and the winding-down of the war.

Things are changing?

by Bruce Cochrane, Student Senator

A funny thing happened on the way to the forum Wednesday. NU's illustrious student government spent nearly thirty thousand dollars of student fees, and it was done in a remarkably casual way.

Upperclassmen you may remember a program sponsored by the National Student Association and ASUN called Time Out, which student government voted not to have last year. Time Out occurred anyway because the resolution was vetoed by Craig Dreezen, last year's president, who quit after one ineffectual semester.

ASUN lost \$500 on that weakly attended event. Well — we're going to do it again only bigger and better this year. We're going to spend \$3,500 to bring in for 36 hours four speakers: a past president of the Berkeley campus, now president of NSA; a liberal educator from New York; a militant black leader from Cornell University; and a past officer of SDS, now a writer for the Manchester Guardian.

Although these people are not representatives of the trend of thought that prevails here, a group of your representatives feel you should be educated as they know best. And don't ask about specifics of the finances involved because you'll only get generalities.

We also set aside \$3,000 to bring in speakers next March for the World in Revolution program.

I don't know who they'll be but I can guess their political alignment.

Then there was \$3,000 for the Human Rights Committee. A thousand to be earmarked to organize the Indians and Mexicans on campus, which one Student Activities office says number no more than 30. We were also going to give \$500 to the Afro-American Society which, considering it includes 350 students in special circumstances, it can use and certainly deserves. However, the way we gave the money was interesting. One senator asked for the \$500; someone told him the black students could really use \$800, so he asked the secretary to amend it to \$800. Before she could get the floor a third senator laughingly whispered across the table to make it a thousand which was done and passed.

The senator who made the motion, a past officer of the local SDS was then asked what the society planned to do with the money. The first thing he said was that if he had his way he'd give them \$10,000, and the second thing was that he didn't know what was going to be done because he didn't feel it proper to ask.

I don't want to bore the reader, but then someone asked for \$500 to support candidates in the next Regents elections. When he was asked who was to supervise the spending of the money and the choosing of candidates to support, he answered, "Well — me and this other guy."

Like I said, it was all very casual.