



## STUDENTS AND THE DRAFT

by L. A. DuBRIDGE

**T**HE "GREAT DEBATE" on U. S. foreign policy is now being paralleled by a great debate on how the U. S. as a nation can most effectively mobilize and utilize its resources of manpower. As dozens of plans and proposals are presented to the public and to the Congress, and as attacks and counter-attacks are waged by scores of interested individuals and groups, the picture appears to be one of hopeless confusion. Is there any chance that reason shall eventually emerge? Is there a chance that as a result of this great debate the nation will arrive at a sensible plan for the effective utilization of our most precious national resource—the nation's men and women?

I have personally participated in this debate through membership on various manpower committees. I have seen at first-hand the complexity of the problems which we face and the confusion inherent in the discussions of them. I am seriously concerned about this problem because of my interest in the future of the students

at Caltech and the future of my own son (age 17).

Nevertheless, I can say sincerely that I believe there are grounds for being optimistic.

In a democracy all major national decisions are inevitably and properly arrived at by the means of a public debate. During this debate the picture is bound to be one of apparent confusion. But out of the confusion decisions eventually emerge.

I base my optimism on two grounds:

1. The manpower problem is being taken with deadly seriousness by our government at the very highest levels, with the aid and participation of some of the best informed, most intelligent and most public-spirited citizens of the nation.

2. If one examines the proposals which have been made by the most authoritative government and non-government bodies, one sees a large area of agreement on basic principles. The confusing disagreements are largely on matters of detail.

The difficulties we face in arriving at a proper manpower policy stem from the fact that this nation now faces a problem never before faced in all its history. This problem is that of both creating and also maintaining for a long period a substantial military "force-in-being". In two previous wars we have created a great military force by drafting all available men, keeping them in service "for the duration" and then releasing them all to go home when the emergency had passed. But what do we do when the emergency may be five, ten, or twenty years in duration? In the language of the engineer, how do we arrive at a "steady state solution" of the emergency problem? Clearly in this "steady state" there will need to be a fixed flow of men into the armed services, and a fixed period of service, following which those men will return to civilian life. If substantially every able-bodied boy who reaches the age of 18 (or 19) each year is taken into the service, serves a fixed period of, say, 27 months and is then discharged, it would be possible (taking into account volunteers and career soldiers) to maintain a "permanent" armed force of 3,000,000 to 3,500,000 men. If some men are exempt, the rest must obviously serve longer. This is the idea behind universal military service.

### A normal flow of students

Under such a plan, in the "steady state", the flow of students returning from service into the colleges and into industry and civilian life would be a normal flow, except that each individual would be some two years older. Even under this plan, however, some provision will have to be made for the training of officers, probably through an expanded R.O.T.C. program, and also for the continued education of exceptionally able students who can serve the country better by completing their educational work before entering the nation's service. This type of plan is the one proposed by many scientific and educational organizations and was presented to Congress by General Marshall on January 17.

However, it is the transient period while such a universal military service plan is going into effect which most concerns the present student body. In this area there is the greatest confusion about the detailed mechanisms which should be adopted to insure an adequate flow of men into the armed services, while at the same time insuring an adequate flow of scientific and other specialized personnel through the colleges. But if we once accept the ultimate goal of UMS, the interim problems do not appear difficult.

One proposal which is receiving very serious consideration at the highest level is that if UMS is adopted then *all* members of this year's sophomore and junior classes and all graduate students (especially in engineering and scientific courses) will be allowed to complete their college courses. At the same time, through selective national tests, a substantial fraction (one-half or more) of the country's best freshmen would be similarly

deferred and a substantial freshman class would be selected for entrance in the fall of 1951. Since a UMS plan, even if adopted now, would not go into full effect for a year or two, next year's freshman and sophomore classes might actually be nearly up to normal enrollments. Since the selection would be on a national basis, Caltech men should fare pretty well.

There is also under serious consideration a plan to establish a national civilian scientific personnel board which shall be responsible, first, for seeing that trained scientists in the 19-26 year age group are retained in scientific or engineering work, either in military or civilian capacity; and second for insuring a continued flow of students through science and engineering courses, and their proper utilization upon graduation. (Present seniors please note!) Such a board with adequate powers would go far toward preventing waste of precious scientific talent.

What Congress will do with these and other proposals it is too early to predict. The important point, however, is that there is a keen recognition on the part of the highest government officials, including those in the Department of Defense, of the necessity for maintaining a flow of college-trained students, and an even keener realization that the flow of students in science and engineering must be maintained at the highest possible level. It seems to me unlikely that Congress will ignore this clearly recognized problem.

### Advice to Caltech students

What then should a Caltech student do? My advice, based on the present situation, is as follows:

1. Sit tight. The confusion will be over in a few weeks and the future will then be more clear.
2. Do not neglect college work. Do the best possible job in the knowledge that you are thereby increasing your value to the nation and to yourself.
3. Insist on your legal right to a postponement of your induction (if your number is called) until the end of the college year.
4. Do not quit college to get a job or to enlist. At the present time you are better off right here pursuing your work.
5. Do not transfer to an "easier" college or an "easier" course. Your best talents are needed by the nation in science and engineering and there is a good chance that your talents will be effectively utilized. A desperate shortage of such talents is in prospect.
6. Recognize the fact that during coming years every young man should expect to undertake the obligation and privilege of serving his country for approximately two years, in either military or civilian capacity. But recognize also that the chances are now good that scientists and engineers will be assigned to duties which make full use of their talents.
7. Send a copy of this statement home to your parents. It may help them understand your problem.