

## Speaking of the Draft

*A Caltech freshman finds out what the seniors think about it.*

In February 1967 the outlook for thousands of male college seniors throughout the country suddenly changed. On the recommendation of President Johnson and Selective Service Director Lewis B. Hershey, a provision of the 1967 Selective Service Act was activated.

To graduating seniors and first-year graduate students, the provision means that they are almost certain to be drafted. According to Department of Defense estimates, 60 percent of the inductees in 1969 will hold degrees, as compared to 5 percent this year.

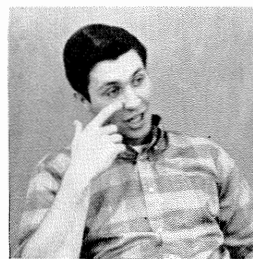
What does the Caltech senior think of this new Selective Service move? It was no surprise to find, in a random survey I conducted, that the seniors are virtually unanimous in their opposition to the draft. The reasons for their opposition, however, *were* surprising.

Only about one-fourth of the seniors questioned said their opposition to the draft was based directly on their opposition to the war in Vietnam. Craig Nelson summed up his position by saying he was against the war and against the draft. Greg Thompson stated, "If you have to draft people, a war is not worth fighting." Denis Elliott said, "The draft is unfair in a free society." Larry Ruzzo called the draft "the closest thing to involuntary servitude." Other seniors also compared the draft to slavery. John Lehman was the only senior questioned who directly stated perhaps the most fundamental opposition of all: "I don't want to die."

Most of the opposition to the draft, however, was based on the belief that the drafting of college seniors and first-year graduate students would be an economic and educational loss. Neil Wright argued that it will be a great waste to have people drafted who would have gone on to graduate school. Sam Logan pointed out that a person's talents could be

utilized more effectively in the service after he had completed graduate education. Dick Ligon said the draft would put "useful people in useless jobs."

Both Ligon and Lou Felder were concerned



Sam Logan

*"I feel I would be more valuable to my country, either in the service or a defense industry, after graduate education."*

about the effects of the draft on higher education. With the removal of many graduate students and prospective graduate students from the colleges, they believe that an even greater strain than at present will be placed on the colleges to provide teachers. Graduate students are now commonly used as teaching assistants. With the removal of many of the graduate students, these vital positions will be unfilled. Thus, colleges may either have to cut back enrollments or curtail faculty research to enable existing faculty members to teach more classes. Either of these alternatives, Ligon and Felder believe, is highly undesirable.

Fully substantiating these fears are two organizations that should know. A recent survey of 122 graduate and professional schools made by the Council of Graduate Schools and the Scientific Manpower Commission resulted in several predictions being made about the effect of the recent action on graduate schools.

- 1.) Total graduate enrollment will fall 50 percent in the first-year graduate class.
- 2.) Seven out of ten male graduating seniors who

ordinarily would do graduate work will either enlist or be drafted.

- 3.) Some state universities, which rely heavily on graduate students to staff freshman courses in composition, foreign languages, and science, will cancel admission notices for one out of five freshmen this summer.
- 4.) Research projects will be disrupted and in some cases abandoned.
- 5.) The needed production of college teachers will be set back.
- 6.) Most universities will operate their graduate schools on a deficit next year due to loss of income from tuition.

Caltech has adopted as its official policy that of the Council of Graduate Schools, which states in part:

We accept and endorse the principle that the national security transcends the interest of any individual or group of individuals, and that military service is an obligation of every able-bodied citizen . . . We believe that a system of selective service should be designed to create a minimum of disruption and uncertainty in the lives of those eligible for induction and that therefore the selection process should take place at a natural time of transition, that is, at the completion of high school . . . We believe that draft-eligible men should be inducted on the basis of random selection upon reaching the age of 19 . . . Men who are not drawn in the year of their prime age classification and who wish to pursue a degree program should not be in jeopardy again until they have completed their immediate degree objective.

Among Caltech seniors asked about alternatives to the present draft system, approximately half agreed with the alternative endorsed by the graduate school council. Lou



Craig Nelson

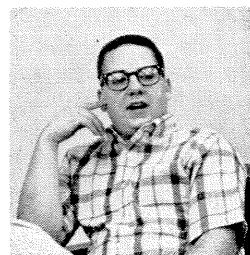
*"I'm against the draft because I'm against the war."*

Felder approved of the principle of two years' service to the country but felt that one should be free to choose alternatives to military service, such as work in the Peace Corps, or VISTA, or similar programs. About one-fourth of the seniors supported this alternative. The other fourth suggested military service on a voluntary basis only.

The final question put to the seniors was,

"What are you going to do if and when you receive your induction notice?" Approximately 20 percent of the seniors stated that they would not serve under any circumstances and that they would go to jail instead. Only one said he would leave the country and go to Canada. More than 80 percent of the seniors questioned said they would put up no resistance and would be peacefully inducted. Many voiced the hope or expectation, however, that

*"The draft is unfair in a free society."*



Denis Elliott

they would be classified 4-F. Neil Wright stated that he would be classified 4-F for a psychological reason—incompatibility with the Army. And one senior had yet another course of action: "I would infiltrate the Army from the inside and do my bit to make it non-functional." He went on to say that if half of every platoon were disgruntled college students, the Army would soon cease drafting them.

Thus, the general outlook on the draft of Caltech seniors is opposition, but with little resistance or initiative to try to change things. In a way, they have decided that it is futile to try to change the decision of President Johnson and General Hershey, since professional educators have been struggling to do just that without success since before the Act was approved by Congress. As one anonymous dean stated in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Oh, everybody wants to do something about the draft—or so they say. Everyone clucks his tongue, but nobody is raising a finger to do anything about it." The dean quoted a proverb from the *Peanuts* comic strip which he felt President Johnson and General Hershey must live by: "No problem is so big or complicated that it can't be run away from."

The attitude of the seniors at Caltech might be best summed up by Bart Gordon, who said, "When you're drafted, you're drafted."

—JIM COOPER, '71