

EDITORIAL:

"Professors,
conscription
and killing"

I was sitting in my office the day after our last issue came out, looking out the window. Several times I saw a different professor pass by with a copy of our paper in his hand. It occurred to me right there that our reading audience is a lot bigger than just the student body. It includes the entire faculty and all those people who have contact with anyone who leaves the campus.

That struck me in a peculiar fashion. I pictured a very learned professor sipping his morning coffee while peering over his metal-rimmed glasses at our paper. (Anyone want to buy a used stereotype?) Anyway, what I'm trying to say is this: I never realized that our paper is being read by others besides students. I hope now, after becoming aware of our larger audience, that our paper's content will be more enjoyable by all.

In light of this revelation, our feature story is geared especially for the faculty members. No doubt there will be a certain philosophy instructor chuckling as he sips his morning coffee—or cognac. (The article was a tentative term paper that I scratched for obvious reasons.)

"Getting smashed
with Plato"

It's very uncommon to see Plato walking in these parts nowadays, much more uncommon to have him drop in for an evening drink. As Socrates put it, "Pass me the hemlock," he'd say with that childish glint in his eyes—a face kept eternally young by the quest for knowledge, and the quench of more cheap rotgut than any man had ever handled. Plato was a rare sight, yes indeed, for when not grappling with Truth at the Forum, he was tying one on whenever he could. He became somewhat unapproachable, to say the least. It was said he'd slept off binges in every corner of the Acropolis, making himself a recluse in the process. No one likes a drunken philosopher.

So when he stopped by, unannounced and apparently sober, I was immediately overcome with the awesome feeling that here was a distant legend before my eyes. Here was a god who knew me by name. "And here goes my best Scotch, no doubt," I thought to myself.

"Pray tell, what brings you here, dear Plato?" I inquired.

"Cut the gunk, will ya? Sheeze, you'd think we were taping the next session of 'Dialogues.'"

His remark took me back, though I thanked him to myself for establishing a basis for communication. One never knew how Plato was feeling—so one always waited for a clue.

"You know," he said, removing a wine-stained toga, "you peasants kill me. You're always coming up with real gems like 'What is Truth, O Wise One?'" I always get asked "What is the meaning to life?" when I'm at Crowley's working on a beer.

His witticism drew a chuckle from me. It also brought about a related topic.

"Would any of that 12-year-old Black Label we shared last time—would any of that still be in the physical realm—more precisely, in your liquor cabinet?"

"O Wise One, concerning the physical realm, I would think you would be in the best position to answer that. Or at least remember how much was left."

The voice was not mine, but my roommate's. Plato looked up, startled. A holly leaf dropped from his wreath-crown. Much had happened since I saw Plato last, one item being that I had taken on a roommate.

"Excuse me Plato," I said. "I want you to meet my roommate."

On to other things . . . And my chance to speak out. I feel responsible to offset the opinion of David Chavez, the author of the "conscription" article appearing on this page. I would argue against his idea of reinstating the draft for two reasons. First, my ambition to carry a gun and shoot people with it disappeared when I was ten, when playing "army" gave me sore feet. I believe (and I feel many others do too) that to kill is wrong. I feel that there is nothing great, noble, or glorious in killing another human being, whether under the illusion of war or not. I know a woman who has spent 20 years caring for stroke victims and other helpless cases; she never received notoriety for her service. But a guy who, in a yellow rush of anger, zips eight gooks in a pillbox, hell, he gets a medal. Something is wrong here.

My other reason for opposing the draft is not ethical, but practical. Imagine this: getting stationed on a godforsaken island near Turkey with a company of sadistic, illiterate junkies. After all, those raunchy types Mr. Chavez writes about do exist. Dope fiends, the emotionally disturbed, escapist, and pot heads now wear green uniforms. The army is currently filled with ranks of uneducated, disillusioned losers the calibre of a New York street gang. And there you are, the first of a new wave of promising, college-educated, clean-cut servicemen. You will be pressured to conform or else be outcast, and fear for

Rene Descartes. Rene, this is the indestructible Plato."

"You can call me Wise," Plato quipped.

"How about Wise Guy?" Rene shot back.

In panic I hurried for the Scotch, hoping the liquid benevolence would prevent a full-scale argument. "Metaphysical discussion," Plato had always said—while being booked again at the station. Often his discussions had grown less meta and more physical. Unfortunately, there was no such charge as "assault with an ethical ideal," so he took the usual thirty days for battery. "Such excellent time for quiet contemplation," he told me once. A centurian I knew said that the graffiti in his cell was heavy-duty stuff. You could go to jail a criminal, spend a day in his cell, and walk out a genius, according to him.

Nevertheless, it was a bad situation. Descartes and Plato had certain differences, and both had read the other's work. I poured a round of drinks quickly and hurried back to the room. Plato's voice, plainly irritated, could be heard as I entered.

"I don't care if you were coming out of the middle ages; that's just more proof that everything you did was in bad taste. You shouldn't have gotten yourself into such a time period." Plato ejected a rancorous laugh. "Although I must admit," he continued, "your 'I think, therefore I am' really had then: baffled for a while. Boy, for a guy trying to prove God exists, you sure made it hard to believe in anything."

"Sit on it, you Greek creep." I interrupted. "Here are your drinks, gentlemen. I trust you will find the Scotch up to your standards." I said, averting my glance from Plato.

"I'm sure I will," Plato replied, "for after all, it's one thing of which I never doubt." He aimed his dig at Renee as he mocked a toast.

Rene started to speak, but was interrupted by a knock at the door. Apparently he had invited a guest, for I was not expecting any company of my own. He opened the door to reveal a drinking buddy of his own for some time now—Soren Kierkegaard. Soren stepped in purposely and met the even stare of a by-now-agitated Plato.

"Well well," Soren grinned broadly. "I see we are to have a meeting of the minds."

"The only place my mind wants to meet yours—"

From that point on, there was little restraint among the ex-

The Draft

STUDENTS AS SOLDIERS ONCE AGAIN

Conscription never has and undoubtedly never will be a popular subject. Traditionally, the American people have always opposed universal military service. Even during the early days of the Republic, conscription was considered by many to be an unacceptable government intrusion into the private affairs of citizens. Accordingly, there has been a history of antidraft sentiment from the serious draft riots in New York during the War between the States to the antidraft demonstrations and draft evasions that marked the period of the Vietnam War.

It was during the apex of the Vietnam War, however, that the subject of conscription was most denounced by the citizenry of the

your very life. Betty quality recruits will win admiration from their superiors — much to the disfavor of current, unmotivated recruits. This would cause a civil war right within the army. The only benefit I can see from this is that if enough decent, well-educated college men were drafted, then eventually the losers would quit, leaving the army in the hands of men better qualified to kill, maim, mutilate, and indiscriminately ravage the enemy forces.

changes these learned philosophers dealt each other. I do recall certain splices of conversation. They ran something like this:

Kierkegaard: "But I tell you Plato, it is a leap of faith."

Plato: "Take a flying leap . . ."

Kierkegaard: "Can't you see that existence precedes essence?"

Plato: "No, but I do see that the good stuff preceded this Old Overcoat you're serving now."

Descartes: "Would you agree then, that God is an impossibility?"

Plato: "Getting a good drink around here seems to be an impossibility."

Descartes: "Soren, when applying existentialism to—"

Plato: "Get me a drink!"

Well, for once I was all too glad to see my liquor run dry. Both Soren and Rene refused to make a beer run (on ethical grounds) so it conveniently worked out that the one most eager to wet his thirst was also the one who had to go get it.

"I can't drive," Plato pouted. He folded his arms and looked away.

"What happened, was your chariot impounded?" Rene joked.

"Plato, you can't walk a straight line, let alone discuss a divided one," Soren added.

"I've had about enough of your abuse," Plato said, a slight whimper in his voice. He simply sat there and faced the corner—like a punished child—until the badgering ceased altogether.

After a good length of time, both Rene and Soren had a change of heart, and apologized for being so hostile.

"Perhaps we can drink in friendship?" Plato asked.

"Of course, of course," they replied.

"Fine. Then I will go out and pick up a case of Molson's. Can you guys throw in for the beer, I'm terribly short on funds. Aristotle is really hot at blackjack lately."

They both gave him ample funds (enough for several cases) and saw him to the door.

"It's been didactic, man," he said.

"Sure. Hurry back," I replied.

"Oh, when I return, remind me to tell you guys the one about the travelling philosopher and the stupid farmer's daughter stuck in the allegory of the cave."

With that remark he left, flipping through the bills with jubilation. The last we saw of him was a dingy toga teetering down the lane singing, "There's no business like show business."

United States in general. The draft formally ended following the signing of the peace treaty agreement on Vietnam and has remained in a state of limbo until now. I say a state of limbo because at the time the draft ended, there existed a very polar state of emotions in this country. People were either far to the left in opposing the military in virtually every respect, or far to the right defending the military and its actions during the past ten years. Very little middle ground existed between these two factions. As a result, in an effort to ameliorate public sentiment, the Nixon and Ford administrations opted for an all-volunteer army.

Considering the anti-military mood of the people at the time, coupled with a reduction in force requirement that follows all wars, the volunteer Army was probably the best solution to the crisis.

During the interlude between the ending of the draft and the present, the Department of Defense has consistently stated that the all-volunteer army is a viable and successful concept. The present and past administration have acclaimed the success of the all-volunteer army based on the numbers of recruits entering the army.

What these numbers don't tell us, however, is what they represent. Indeed, they represent quantity, but a closer inspection reveals they hardly represent quality.

An inordinate number of these recruits are people who have been unable to secure employment in civilian life, and have turned to the military as a hospice in time of austerity. These recruits represent social rejects who are, up to now, losers if you will — people who haven't the aptitude or the intestinal fortitude to attain even the basic level of independence without some form of assistance from others. It is because of these recruits that the armed forces have been forced to reprint many of their technical manuals at the eighth grade level.

Ancillary to this train of thought is the discipline that is so central to the success or failure of a military force. This large number of social rejects can hardly be expected to stand up under the strain of Draconian life expected of a military man. And to put this calibre of man in combat where the lives of an entire company must depend on his vigilance and courage would be tantamount to destruction.

Insofar as women are concerned, I see nothing wrong with women in the service. I do, however, see something wrong with women in combat. Women have yet to prove their capability of fulfilling the arduous and mindshattering experiences of combat. Perhaps I'm a bit chauvinistic, but from personal experience, I doubt that the average female can pack 30 to 50

pounds of equipment through the jungle while cutting through the bush with a machete. Until the day when America produces this legion of Amazons, we will have to consider the battlefield as one arena of male dominance.

Recent publications have alluded to the return of the draft in America. A few senators have expounded the concept and are vigorously encouraging their colleagues to do the same. Support for return to the draft appears to be gaining momentum as the scars of the Vietnam debacle begin to fade. The time when the people will again see military service as a proud and honorable pursuit is returning — and with it, I hope, is a new-found sense of patriotism that has been buried too long.

Re-examination of our state of readiness has clearly demonstrated that America is fast losing ground in both quantity and quality with Soviet military might. Quantity is the least of our concerns. We can, if the need arises, obtain manpower in vast quantities — but the question of quality is another matter.

Quality implies a healthy, well-trained soldier. A quality soldier is as good as five soldiers of poor quality. The Greeks taught us this lesson in 490 B.C., when 300 Spartans delayed the Persian invasion of northern Greece at Thermopylae. These 300 Spartans lost their lives, but in doing so, gave the Greeks time to organize and finally to destroy the most formidable military might at the time. History has often testified to the training of the Spartan warrior and to the fruits of their success in battle.

This same dogma is consistent with modern military success today. But since our young men are fortunate enough not to be placed in a training regimen to prepare them in the ways of war — as were the Spartan males — we must have some method of preparing our men for the possibility of war.

The draft appears to be the only viable means to attain this goal. Not enough quality men volunteer for the armed forces because it is the man of quality who chooses where his life is to go. Few men of this caliber opt for the service. The service implies a change in lifestyle often unacceptable to the average person coupled with discipline unlike that found in all but the strictest of households. Understandably then, the service is unattractive to most successful people.

The fact remains that today a minimum of three months is required to produce quality cannon fodder. To train a man in a more technical job such as avionics, armor, flight, or what have you, requires a considerably longer period of time.

Faced with the possibility of a Blitzkrieg, Russian-style, we must begin now to prepare our armed forces for such an even-

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