

A FEW days ago a tall, well-built young man walked into my office. He is a star athlete and a member of a varsity team.

He handed me a letter requesting that he be released from his contract with the U. S. Army; a contract which provided that he complete his advanced Reserve Officer Training Corps course and accept a commission upon graduation from O. U.

I was particularly curious about his reasons. I was sure he would make a good officer.

Academically he is in the upper half of his class and with a four-year scholarship he had no financial worries.

Moreover, his answers to my questions brought out the fact that he liked his military science courses and wanted very much to become an officer in the Army.

His father, it turned out, has convinced him that it was best for him to give up this ambition.

The father's reasoning, I discovered, was based on plans to take his son into business partnership when the son graduated, and to have him work in the business during the coming summer instead of attending the six-week summer ROTC camp.

Since the student is a private in a Reserve unit, the father reasoned that his son would be draft-exempt during the remainder of his university course, and that he would not be required to serve any active duty time in the Army.

Was this father's advice in the best interests of his son's future?

Before trying to answer that question, let me mention another young man—Lt. Houston L. Slate of Bradley, Oklahoma.

Lieutenant Slate, like the athlete, also came to my attention. He is, in fact, a marked man in the records of the department of military science at O. U.—distinguished from his comrades in that he was the 4,000th student from O. U. to receive his commission as a second lieutenant in the Army of the United States through the department's ROTC program.

This young man, a 1958 geology graduate, is typical of the University's students who are being commissioned from the Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC units at O. U. today.

Established on September 1, 1919, O. U.'s department of military science (U. S. Army ROTC) is a traditional, but controversial, part of this great university. The controversy stems from the question Lieutenant Slate and the athlete found posed for them the day they came of draft age: What's best for me as regards my military obligations?

Which *is* the better decision—Lieutenant Slate's or the athlete's?

The most dramatic answer would be an unexpected national emergency, such as

happened because of Korea in June 1950.

The athlete could be ordered to active duty as a private in the Reserve unit to which he belongs. It would then be impossible to say how long or arduous the delay of going into business with his father would be; not to mention the time required in returning to college for the completion of his degree.

But by remaining enrolled in his ROTC course, the athlete would be allowed to complete his university education, receive his baccalaureate degree and his officer's commission, and then go on duty as an officer—a second lieutenant and not a private.

Like Lieutenant Slate, he would prepare himself through education and through officer training to serve his country in the highest capacity in the Armed Forces that his capabilities would allow. He would be a leader instead of a follower.

Even the small amount of ROTC training the athlete has completed will help him.

Recently a graduate of the University who had completed the two-year basic ROTC course, applied for and was granted a Military Training Certificate which authorized him to enlist in a Reserve unit as a private first class (E-3) instead of enlisting as a private (E-1).

To the former student who decides to serve his military obligation in a Reserve or National Guard unit, the Military Training Certificate for satisfactory completion of a portion of the ROTC course can give advanced rank and pay status which otherwise would take considerable time and effort to attain.

Not only has the student benefited who completes only the required two years of ROTC training, but so have you and I as citizens. In war as well as in peace, ROTC courses have provided us with better-trained soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen.

And we need trained Armed Services personnel today as never before.

We are rapidly entering into the space age with its man-made planets and earth satellites, and with new scientific discoveries and new theories being announced in rapid succession—too rapid in fact for the layman to keep up with them—let alone understand them all.

In the past two decades of shooting wars and of the so-called Cold War, the Armed Forces of this country have made or sponsored nearly all of the advancements that this country has made in developing these new wonders with which we are surrounded.

Only a few years ago most of us had never heard of the Army's Dr. Werner von Braun—now acclaimed as our leading authority on missiles and space travel. If we

THE CONTROVERSY THAT RAGES AROUND THE ROTC . . .



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did hear of him and happened to read some of his articles about space travel, most of us thought of him and his kind as visionary crackpots.

But not only have the Armed Forces led us to the development of missiles and space travel but during these two decades military requirements have led to the development of such things as nuclear weapons and power plants, the jet aircraft, vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, radar, electronic computers, faster ships and under-seas craft, improved communications systems, and a host of other developments that now, or shortly will—affect our daily lives as well as our nation's safety.

The science and art of warfare is under constant change caused by the rapid development of new weapons systems, and by the new capabilities of our industrial and economic system.

Any one new weapon can cause—and has caused—a complete revision of our concept of waging war and of defending our nation. Most important, a new weapon can change the requirement of the caliber and training of the officers and men whom we have in the Armed Forces.

Nostalgic memories of the simplicity of life in the services of just twenty years ago is common among higher ranking officers—struggling to grow with all of the training, equipment, and the instant operational status required of each service; and on a greatly expanded, though highly restricted budget.

Last year a regular Army Infantry captain I know enrolled at the University under the Army's Civil Schooling Program. Since his graduate course of study was in electrical engineering he was asked, "What in the world does the Infantry need with electrical engineers?"

His reply, of course, was that the Infantry is getting its guided missiles and needs electronic engineers to supervise all phases of their operation.

Today, the beginning officer must not only have demonstrated a high degree of leadership, personal integrity, and physical fitness, but must also have demonstrated by his scholarship record in college that he is capable of assimilating rapidly the instruction he will receive in his military career in a succession of service schools. He must receive his Bachelor's degree before he can receive his service commission through the ROTC program.

This is a major change from the earlier days of ROTC.

It is easy to understand why. Each new piece of our newly created military hardware has the characteristic of demanding more and better men to direct, operate, support and maintain it.

An incident I know of in World War II has always reminded me of this fact. I told it to the athlete and I would like to have had a chance to repeat it to his father, in that his father, as a businessman, can understand the problems of technological transition.

In May of 1942, a Coast Artillery unit was landed at Port-of-Spain in the British West Indies. On board a freighter at the docks were twelve radar sets for this regiment. But there was no one in the regiment who had ever seen a radar set before.

That this equipment was needed in anti-submarine warfare was unquestioned—only a few weeks before a German submarine had torpedoed a freighter tied up at the main docks and got away undetected.

Yet it was weeks before the highly trained technicians arrived who could properly assemble and operate this equipment. The men of the regiment, although skilled in the operation of the old weapons, were just not capable of assembling, operating and maintaining this complex electronic gear.

That O. U. and its ROTC programs have made a vital contribution to the Nation's defense was attested to recently by Major General Lewis Griffing, Deputy Commanding General, Fourth Army, in a statement at the University:

"The great number of Field Artillery Reserve officers produced by the ROTC unit at O. U. before the war was a crucial factor in the rapid expansion of the Field Artillery in 1940, '41, and '42."

The demand for skilled and unskilled manpower in our future wars could mount astronomically.

The paradox of our new weapons systems is that no new system completely replaces the old system. Even though we are on the verge of putting man into space; even though we have supersonic bombers and missiles; we still must have the foot-soldier armed with a rifle.

True, the infantryman of today has new weapons and equipment for survival, he is transported by air and by armored surface vehicles. But in the final analysis he is still the key to battle for he must finally close with the enemy on the ground, destroy him, occupy his land and control his war-making potential.

In World War I over four million men served in the U. S. Army. During World War II the number rose to over eleven million men. What will the manpower requirements be for World War III? Will we need an army of twenty million men? Of course

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we pray that this war will never be fought—but if we are to prevent it from being fought, we must be in condition to win it.

The ROTC program is of paramount importance to our system of preparedness for fighting big or little wars of this country—a system that envisions a ready and capable force of professionals—backed up by ready reserve forces to take the brunt of the early phases of our fighting—until the millions of fighters can be made of Mr. John Q. Citizen.

When World War I started, the ROTC was a new program and there were very few Reserve Officers. Much has been written about the "90 Day Wonder" officers produced by the Officer Training Camps of that war. When World War II started, the ROTC and other programs had produced over 100,000 Reserve Officers. In spite of this number, these officers were spread very thin in the rapid mobilization of the Army.

Typical is an anti-aircraft gun battery which was activated at Camp Davis, North Carolina. The battery commander was a Reserve Officer and the only officer assigned. His enlisted cadre consisted of one corporal and ten privates, all of whom had been in the Army less than four months. To this nucleus was added one hundred and thirty draftees fresh from all walks of life.

The officer, a product of the ROTC program, had less than three months active service; however, the corporal had sixteen years service . . . all in the horse cavalry.

Needless to say, it took longer to make an effective fighting unit of this battery than we can afford to take in the present world situation.

These civilian soldiers must be organized around, and trained by a corps of capable officers who have been prepared for this job.

Here is where the ROTC becomes so very important to us, for the survival of our nation depends to a large degree on it.

Today the Army ROTC in our senior colleges and universities produces more officers for the Regular Army than any other source—including West Point. For the active Army the great bulk of the officers were trained and received their commissions through the ROTC program. (There are approximately 93,000 officers in the "active" Army, of whom approximately 40,000 are Regulars and the remainder are Reserve Officers on extended active duty.)

In the Army Reserve and National

Guard the great majority of officers received their commissions through the ROTC program.

If we were to need an army of 20 million men in another war, where would the officers come from? We would need at least two and one-half million of them for the Army alone.

Again, the key people in such a mobilization would be our active Army officer corps and our reserve officers—both these groups being made up largely of men who received their commissions through completion of the ROTC program.

Around this fairly large nucleus other officers could be added by direct commissioning of specialists, and from Officer Candidate Schools, until the required numbers were trained and available.

In this event the boy who had completed basic ROTC only would have first chance of being selected for Officer Candidate School.

One of the members of the Army ROTC staff at the University was until recently assigned to an Infantry unit at Ft. Hood, Texas. This unit was giving basic and advanced training to new enlistees and draftees prior to their being shipped to Germany as replacement to units of the 3rd Armored Division. He stated that 90% of the acting trainee non-commissioned officers were men selected for these positions because they had completed the Basic ROTC course in college. Their ROTC training was recognized and not only did they have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability for promotion to permanent non-commissioned officer rank and for selection as officer candidates, but their acting rank excused them from such onerous tasks as kitchen police.

There is no question of overproduction of officers for our armed forces. Our only limitation is in having the money and the means to train them in periods when the nation is not faced with a state of emergency.

There *is* a question of our being able to secure enough applicants for ROTC training—applicants who can meet the high standards required of officers today.

No longer are personal bravery, leadership ability and personal integrity the main requirements in an officer candidate. The present day officer must be a technician, military leader, planner, administrator, and diplomat. He must have a broader understanding not only of a variety of technical devices and procedures, but also of management, human psychology, and of government.

As an example, Captain John A. Miles, who received his commission through the

ROTC program, commands a NIKÉ missile battery situated near a small town in Maryland. His unit is a part of the air defense system of the United States, and the battery is sited for the defense of the city of Washington, D. C. His stock of missiles includes both the AJAX and the HERCULES. His HERCULES missiles can be fitted with either a high explosive or a nuclear warhead as the situation demands. His battery is capable of opening fire on attacking enemy airplanes at any time—day or night—and every day of the year. The complex equipment used by his battery is valued at many millions of dollars.

Captain Miles' men, with few exceptions, are highly trained missile, radar, and nuclear technicians. He is responsible for welding them into a well disciplined and effective team and for keeping them constantly keened up to a high state of readiness.

But also, this young officer is the commander of a small Army post with its myriad of complex administrative and morale problems.

When the battery was first established, the local townspeople were alarmed because they believed the soldiers would cause trouble; but more worried because they were afraid of the weapons.

Captain Miles found that he not only had to serve as a leader but as a diplomat. With the assistance of his higher headquarters, he allayed fears of that Maryland town and now he and the members of his command are a welcome addition to the community.

The challenge to that officer is typical of the tremendous responsibilities being assumed by many young ROTC officers of all the services. It is a challenge which his collegiate military training enabled him to cope with quickly and more effectively.

In a country such as ours where over 60% of the government's income is spent for national defense—even though it is sometimes grudgingly spent—that country must have at least a representative proportion of its best-trained brainpower and ability in its armed forces if it is long to survive.

The ROTC—the decision of Lieutenant Slate and of the 3,999 young men who preceded him at O. U.—this is the answer to What's Best?

An educated man of today, if he is to be properly prepared for constructive life in the society in which fate has placed him, must have direct knowledge of his country's military posture and of the forces which influence it.

The more knowledge—the better for us all.