

Compulsory Military Training And Failure Of A Mission

Compulsory ROTC In Colleges From 'The Nation'

Gene M. Lyons
(This is reprinted from "The Nation")

Our editorial page this morning is basically devoted to the changing concepts of the Reserve Officers Training Programs now in effect on the various university and college campuses throughout the United States. Especially, we call your attention to the case of Frederick L. Moore at the University of California at Berkeley.

Moore is a freshman student at UCLA who has stated that preparing for the military is repugnant to his personal beliefs and that there are many other students such as he who cannot reconcile themselves to military instruction. They object to "killing and any action aiding war or the purpose of war."

Actually, the case in point is not whether Moore is conscientious objector or not. We are not prepared to defend such a position.

We are, however, concerned with some of the other implications of this and other cases which become manifest of late.

This paper is in thorough agreement with the declaration of the USNSA which states: "The USNSA is opposed to the compulsory status of basic ROTC programs on the nation's college and university campuses." Except in times of national emergency when so designated by the President and the Congress, there can be no conceivable reason for enforced military training in universities or colleges. It may be argued by the military that the existing service academies cannot possibly supply our armed forces with sufficient officers to maintain and execute the several services. That may be quite true. But it is not the duty nor obligation of an institute of higher learning to reconstruct its curriculum to the extent of perversion merely for the sake of casting military careers in a more appealing light. This must be the responsibility of the services themselves.

Our country is overly militant as is. We believe that educational institutions should by their very nature instruct the student, first and foremost, in the sciences and the humanities, letting him discover for himself, as far as possible, what it means to be a human being in a society which itself is interdependent with other societies — its primary concern can never be the instruction of what it means to be a militant human being. Should such a philosophy ever arise in this country wherein military defense preempts peaceful offense, our societal destruction will be assured. A careful investigation of the world's history establishes this point conclusively for any intelligent person.

We believe that the ROTC program on this campus is being handled effectively and intelligently and might serve as a good example to other institutions. The morale is reasonably high. The program of instruction is a supplement — and a voluntary one — to university education, not an equal or separate branch. And, we might add, the University of North Carolina's ROTC program is well respected by the professional military as being sensible, competent and liberal.

We conclude with another warning. The military branch of this government is, in its conception, under the direction of the administrative branch of the government. It must, in its designated capacity, serve the civilian. It must not be allowed to become a political entity of autonomy.

We would do well to remember that the strength of this country lies not in our capacity for human understanding among peoples.

Frank Crowther

What About This?

1. The nation is at war.
2. The nation is losing the war, badly.
3. The nation must exert a vastly greater effort.

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There are units of the Army, Navy and Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps on more than three hundred college and university campuses across the country. At least once a week, 250,000 undergraduates put on uniforms to march, maneuver and take instruction in weaponry, tactics and military administration. This is a sizable commitment in terms of student effort. It is also of little practical value. What the students learn in ROTC bores them, gives them a dim view of what their military service holds in store, and has so little affect that almost all they learn has to be learned over again once the young officers enter on active duty.

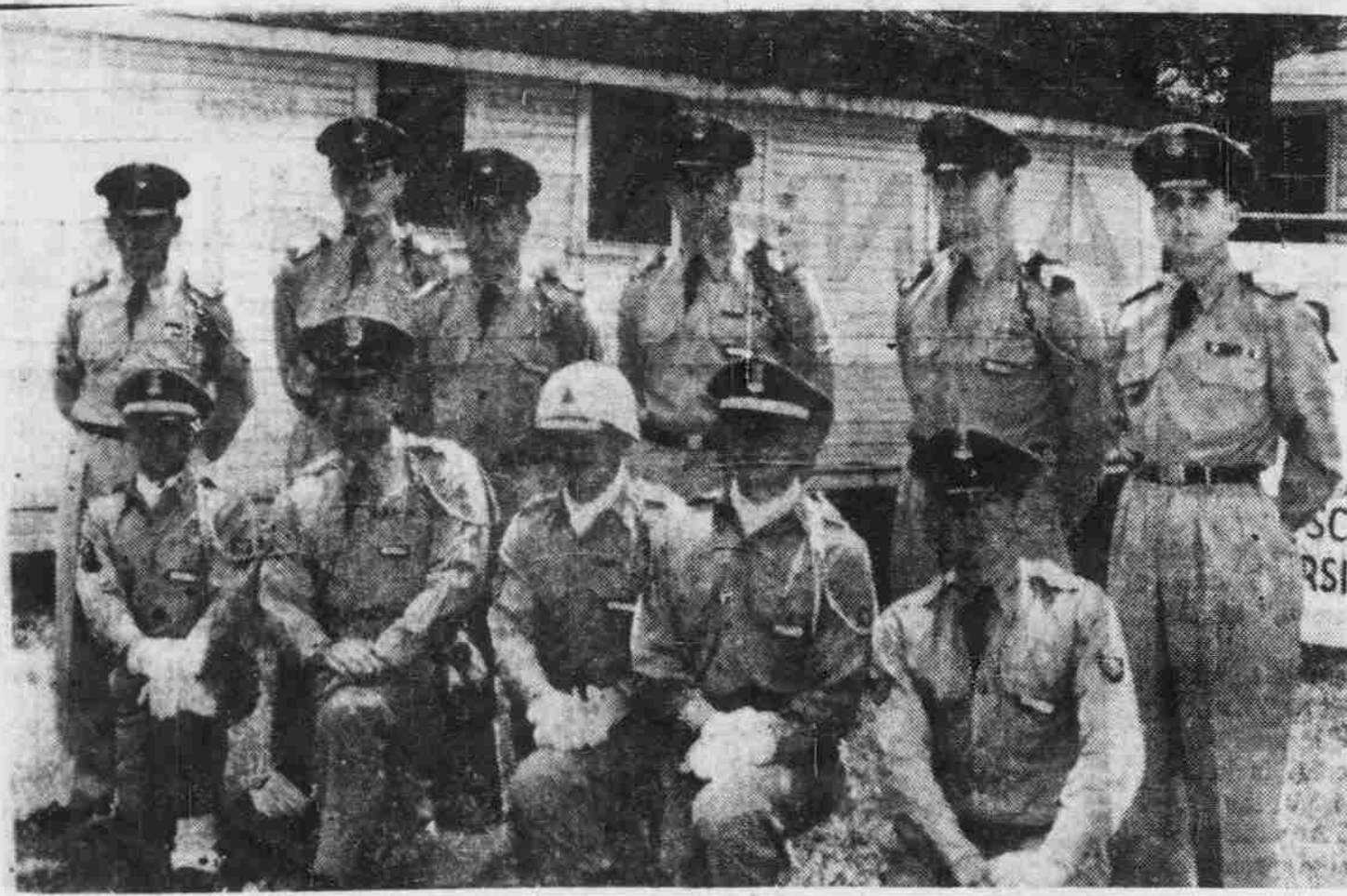
The trouble is that while the armed forces want to attract some of the best students into the service as career officers, they treat them as if they were immature high school sophomores. Young officers bound for duty on nuclear-powered submarines and supersonic aircraft need instruction in mathematics and physics. Instead, they are forced to give up academic time to the nuts-and-bolts of preatomic warfare. College and university administrators, even though they maintain that ROTC units are a genuine contribution to national defense, often give the program less attention than the Junior Prom.

This being the situation, it would seem that things could work out if everyone just gave more time and thought to ROTC, and the program made more truly a part of the student's educational experience. Such a program would include completely voluntary participation, less military training on the campus, and in increased number of specialized and liberal courses useful to men in their military service.

This, of course, is easier said than done. It has, moreover, little meaning unless seen against the purposes the ROTC is supposed to serve. The ROTC was originally established and long maintained as part of a system of citizen reservists that lay at the heart of American military policies. Today, however, it is a vast recruiting device for the professional officer corps. This is no accident of time or history. Factors that once made the reserve system practical no longer exist. A large, standing military force is now in existence which requires a great number of well-trained professionals of intelligence and skill. Today, our colleges and universities are the largest repositories of the talented manpower the services need and the ROTC is the source through which they hope to get their share. Any effort to improve the ROTC program in terms of making it more attractive and stimulating for college students, therefore, presupposes that civilian colleges and universities should, in fact, be recruiting grounds for the professional officer corps. Here we run into trouble.

Traditionally (at least in the popular image), the professional officer came from the service academies. The ROTC, in the last ten years, has offered college students as alternative to being drafted as privates or seamen, but was obviously never thought of as a substitute for West Point and Annapolis. Yet the fact is that the service academies are no longer able to furnish all the young officers needed to lead a professional military force of 2,500,000 men.

One solution, of course, would be to expand the service-academy system. But do we really want to? There are at least two compelling reasons for not doing so. First, there is the grave possibility of developing an inbred elite of sizable proportions in an important professional group — a vital consideration in a society where diversity and social mobility undergird many basic liberties. And second, only through an expansion program that would, at best, duplicate the civilian system of higher education, or, at worst, be an inferior substitute, could the academies offer the broad educational An alternate situation would be to force the military to choose the



additional officers they need from among those young men who do not attend college. In this connection, we must remember that we are seeking, through private and public scholarship and student-aid programs, to eliminate economic barriers to higher education. Do we want to deprive the military of the same kind of opportunity to attract young men of talent and promise into the ranks of its leadership as we give General Motors, B.B.D.&O., and Colgate-Palmolive?

If, therefore, we view the problem faced by the armed forces with serious concern, we have to begin to figure out how to make more college graduates look forward to careers with the military. Despite steps already taken by the military departments, ROTC-trained officers are not staying in the service in large or even adequate numbers. Some of the reasons lie in the services themselves: low pay, a discouraging promotion system, difficult family conditions, and the discipline and callousness to individual problems implicit in the nature and size of the military establishment. But beyond these, an important reason is that, for the most part, these young officers never intended to make the military a career when they entered the ROTC in the first place. The fundamental transformation of the ROTC to a source of professional officers has simply not gotten across to the most important people involved: the students.

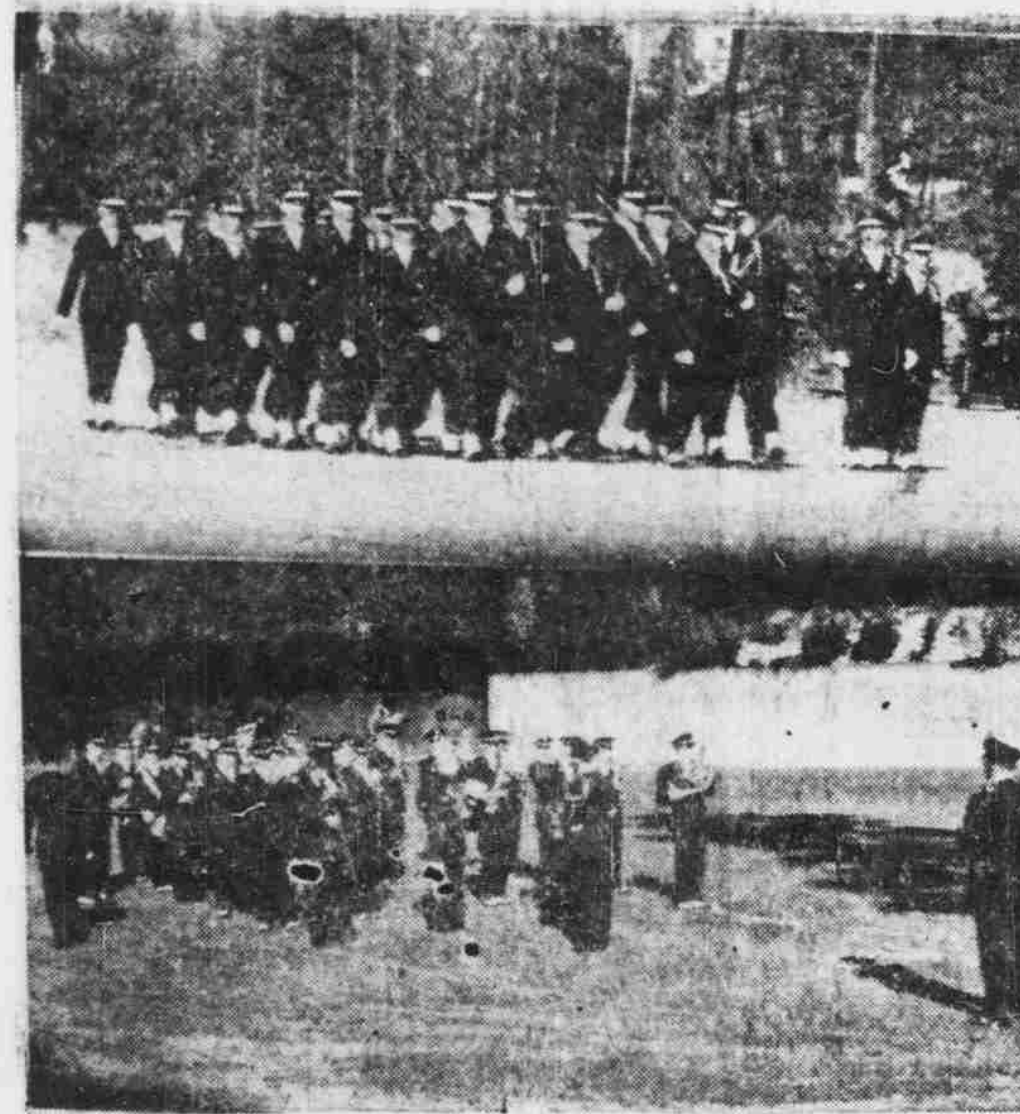
No change in the ROTC program is by itself going to remedy this fundamental failing. Military life, from the point of view of pay, promotion, intellectual satisfaction, family security and social acceptance, will simply have to be made more attractive. This is a task for the President, Congress, public leaders and opinion-makers at all levels, and the military themselves. But in this process, a good deal can also be done with ROTC campus activities to stimulate students' interest in the military as a career.

The ROTC programs now offered on college campuses fail seriously in this regard. For the most part, the courses are vocationally-oriented, particularly in the Army and Navy programs. The curriculum is fragmented and has little intellectual content; relief from technical instruction comes only in courses in military and naval history. The Air Force goes farther than the other services in the area of social sciences, including in its curriculum courses in international relations, geography, psychology and administration. In all three services, however, the instruction in social-science-type courses is usually way below par. Not only are the military instructors not prepared to teach the social sciences, but they are forced to rely on inadequate, service-prepared texts that are neither very objective nor very exciting. The results of all these efforts are frustrated officers, angry faculty, and disdain-

ful students.

In some institutions, this unhappy situation has been avoided. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for example, the Navy has a special program in which it generally keeps out of the student's way except to remind him that he is, in fact, going into the Navy, and that there are a few basic things about being a naval officer he had better know. The interests in such a program are mutual; the Navy is anxious to have M.I.T.-trained engineers in its ranks, and M.I.T. is professionally interested in the problems of the Navy and wants to offer its graduates the opportunities in nuclear propulsion and electronics that naval service opens up. Nevertheless, M.I.T. was not ready to accept the prescribed naval ROTC program and the Navy was sufficiently covetous of the M.I.T. product to know when to stop insisting.

At Princeton, too, the faculty and administration put their minds to the task and developed a number of courses within academic departments to replace military-developed Army courses. Similar efforts, on a less ambitious scale, have been made at Harvard, Yale, and Ohio State University. The Air Force has invited all colleges and universities with Air Force ROTC units to substitute academic courses where possible, or to staff the regular Air Force course with civilian instructors. Few colleges have taken up the challenge, however. For one thing, the Air Force



BY KELLY

BY SCHLITZ

ROTC Letter

Editor:

The following is an excerpt from an Associated Press dispatch published in the Washington Post, Tuesday, October 31:

"An Air Force Colonel's son has started a seven day fast in protest against compulsory enrollment in the Reserve Officers Training Corps at the University of California at Berkeley.

"The freshman mathematics student circulated a petition and said he objected to 'killing and any action aiding war or the purpose of war.'

"The petition says, 'We feel that students who cannot participate in military training due to their religious beliefs and conscientious beliefs should not be required to take ROTC.'

As you are probably aware, the United States National Student Association is firmly opposed to compulsory ROTC on campuses throughout the country and such schools as the University of Wisconsin have recently taken action to try to relieve themselves of compulsory ROTC at their campuses.

It is my hope that through writing editorials in your campus newspaper, through generating a similar petition, through student government resolution, through informing other colleges in your area, and through sending editorials, petitions, student government resolutions, and perhaps letters of support for the student, Frederick L. Moore, to the University Administration at Berkeley, perhaps his right may be won without starvation.

I hope you will find the time and energy to cooperate in this endeavor.

Very truly yours,
Curtis B. Gans
National Affairs Vice President
U. S. National Student Association

NSA Resolution

FACT: The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 made funds available to all state universities and colleges that would offer, but not necessarily compel, a Reserve Officers Training Program. Today, many state universities and independent or private institutions compel their male students to take two years of basic ROTC training because of additional action taken by the state legislatures and/or by the administration of the institutions.

PRINCIPLE: USNSA believes that compulsory ROTC is:

1. An infringement upon the academic freedom of the American college student;
2. Of questionable academic value in a student's education;
3. A great waste of some students' time, in the cases of universities' facilities and of federal funds.

USNSA further believes that a voluntary ROTC program would result in more, better qualified ROTC graduates at a marked reduction in cost.

DECLARATION: The USNSA is opposed to the compulsory status of basic ROTC programs on the nation's college and university campuses.

ACTION: The USNSA urges all student governments, college and university administrations, and state legislatures to work toward the elimination of the compulsory status of basic ROTC Programs on their campuses.

