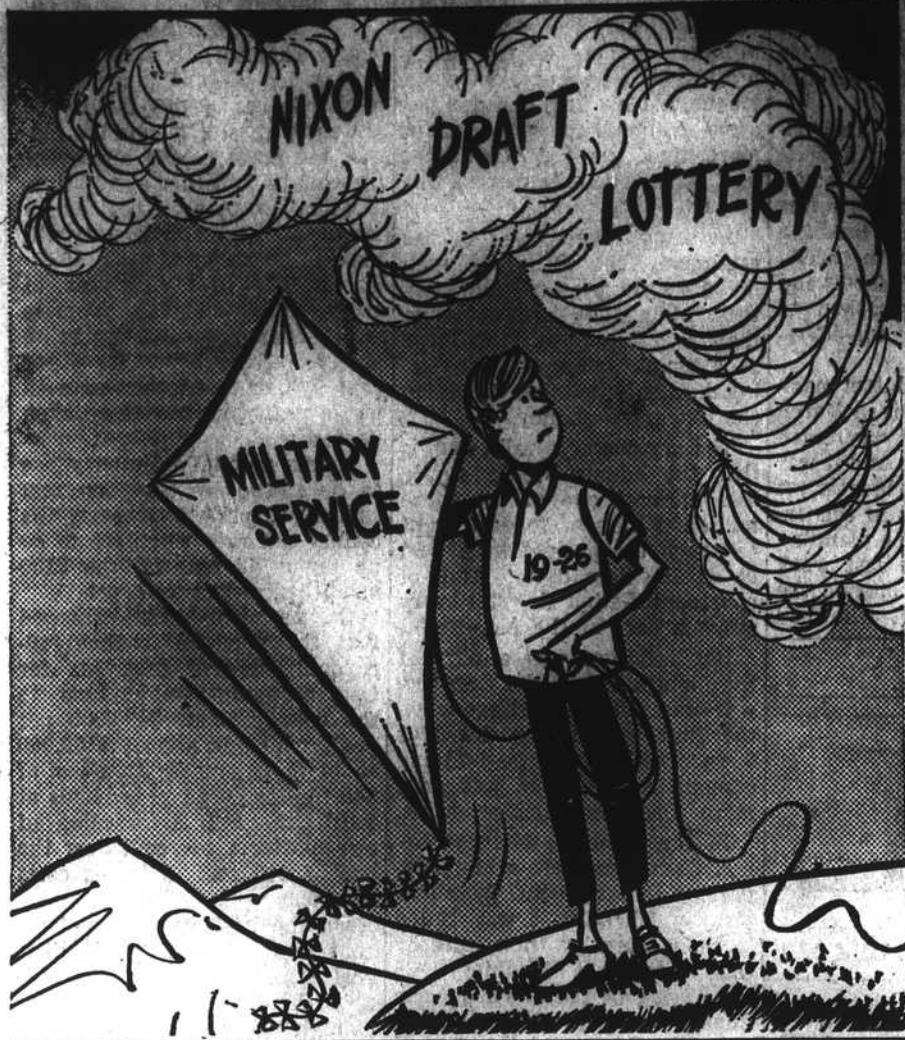


A More Gentle Breeze?



EDITORIALS

Never Forget That These Editorials Are The Opinion Of One Man
— And He May Be Wrong

About The Draft

President Nixon's suggested administrative changes in the operation of the military draft are an improvement over the stupid mess the nation has suffered for much too long, but more — much more — needs to be done.

Nixon's plan to draft 19-year-old boys first will relieve some of the pressure on college-age boys who have developed into a national powder-keg largely because of either their cowardice or their sincere view that the nation's position in Vietnam is morally unsupportable.

For whatever cause the specter of the draft board has been a disrupting influence over young men just when they are at that age when they feel their first real surge of freedom.

But ultimately something better than a gambler's chance must be devised to supply the manpower every modern nation must have for its own protection.

We hold that a hit-or-miss gambler's choice which taps one boy and leaves another untouched is immoral, and we accept the certainty that a purely volunteer effort would not supply the manpower needs of our nation.

But a combination of universal military training and a highly paid and highly trained volunteer corps coming from the universally called up group could do the job if properly handled.

Every young man needs a taste of military life. It will make a better man of those who have character and it will make no worse that minority who have no character. If every young man knew to a positive certainty that he was going to be called up on his 18th birthday for one year of service — in peace as well as in war — a lot of the anxieties that have plagued our youth for the past generation would be eliminated.

Then some of that million and a half each year would find the various services to their taste. As usual the majority would not like military life. But those young men whose talents and tastes did

lean them in the direction of a military career could then be coaxed to become volunteers with excellent pay, the finest educational opportunities, full development of their potential and enhanced retirement benefits. This combination would cost less and produce a better armed force than we have today and it would be fair in that every able bodied young man would have an exposure and none would be accidentally exempted.

The Grossest Inequity

One of the consuming passions of centralized government is the belief that some "expert" in a distant office knows better what each town and county in the nation needs than the people in those scattered communities.

And it is a bitter paradox that these bureaucrats who worship at the shrine of egalitarianism deliberately practice the grossest inequities when they are given god-like power over the distribution of tax funds that are taken from us all on the same basis.

North Carolina is a horrible example of this abuse in two of the largest departments of government: Education and Welfare. A combination of bureaucrats in Raleigh and Washington has developed paternalistic formulas for distribution of money in these two vast departments.

Even the men charged with the responsibility of administering this unfair distribution do not understand what they are doing, much less why.

But the pretty little theory behind their unreasoning is that "rich" states and "rich" counties should be penalized while "poor" states and "poor" counties must be patronized.

And all of this is done in such a complex manner that quite frequently the local officials most directly concerned with these departments of government

Matching Fund Madness

Not the least penalty of overlapping matching fund programs involving local, state and federal funds is the use of such situations to chisel more money out of each jurisdiction.

County commissioners are told with monotonous regularity: "If you'll just put up a few more thousand local dollars we can get a lot more state and federal money for this project or that program. The emphasis is not often placed where it should be on whether there is a genuine need to expand or to institute such projects and programs.

Commissioners are told that it is "good business" to put up a thousand local tax dollars when that thousand will attract ten thousand federal tax dollars to the county. And all too frequently boards of commissioners accept this argument and scratch up that extra thousand whether the county really needs that \$11,000 project or not.

And this generally steals a thousand dollars from the budget of some county department that is not blessed, or cursed, with the "benefits" of matching funds. Naturally this generates frictions between those departments who "git" and those who don't "git." It also quite frequently leaves departments with badly slashed budgets that desperately need more money to provide badly needed services.

Every branch of both the state and federal governments that have funds for distribution to cities and counties should simply allocate those funds on a per capita basis to the governing boards of those counties and let those governing boards spend such funds on the projects that they feel to be in the best interest of their county.

But the bureaucrats in Raleigh and Washington will fight to their last drop of red ink against any such proposal since it is an article of their faith that they know more about what each town and county needs than the people who live in those communities.

If one county wanted to build better roads with its funds and another better schools the levelling process would force all local officials to ultimately do the right thing with the money they received and think of all the bureaucrats who could be freed to do some productive work.

are not even aware of what is going on. And many of those who do understand are afraid to scream for fear that another twist of that paternalistic little formula will further emasculate their own budgets.

Such an inequitable system sees seven North Carolina counties allocating over \$1 of their total tax rate for schools. (Craven, Granville, Henderson, Lenoir, Mecklenburg, Scotland and Washington.) And on the other extreme we find 17 counties that are spending less than 60 cents of their total tax rate on schools, and five that are spending less than 50 cents! And due to the same type of abuse the spread of county welfare levies is as great.

How any person of basic morality sitting in the high echelons of either education or welfare can decide that a child's education in one county, or the feeding of a child in one county should be treated differently than in another county is completely beyond comprehension. Yet this practice as between state, and between counties within each state is not only permitted but is ordered by the highest authorities in both fields.

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PERSONAL PARAGRAPHS

BY JACK RIDER

Last week I was understandably just a trifle more than taken back by the prices involved in the opening of bids for Lenoir County's new hospital. There had been a steady patter of conversation and softening news stories about the terrible toll of inflation, but I cannot accept excuses of this kind, since from the outset of planning for this hospital this same tune has been droned into the ears of all who were involved in the planning.

The simple answer is that the hospital has been over-designed and the Lenoir County taxpayers are stuck with it because it is too late in the day and it would be much too expensive to send the architect back to the drawing boards for a plan that would be within the money ear-marked for this project. This is not the first, nor the last, nor the worst instance of over-design to hit Lenoir County taxpayers in the pocket-book. It is, however, the biggest blow in dollars and cents. The \$600,000 elementary school in East Kinston is the worst example of over-design. This project started out three years ago as a \$350,000 gleam in the school board's eye and wound up as a \$600,000 mote in the taxpayers' eyes.

Just 11 months ago in Nash County bids for their 300-bed (all private bed) hospital amounted to \$8,495,627. Now Lenoir Countians seemed to be relaxed and accepting the rape that is going to see them tapped out for more than \$10 million for a 285-bed hospital. Inflation there is but not to that degree and in so short a period.

For a large part of the past 21 years since I came back to Kinston I have been involved in the effort to get a more adequate medical facility for Lenoir County. I have knots on my head and ulcers in my stomach from the irritations and excitements of this effort. And I feel that the building committee has not kept faith with me, and much more importantly they have not kept faith with the taxpayers of Lenoir County in permitting this over-design.

But the expensive little bastard has now been left on the county's doorstep and we'll just have to manage somehow to take care of it, because we cannot deny its parentage. But in dozens of meetings in every part of the county the building committee and myself and many others told the people that only \$5,775,000 of the \$7,775,000 bond issue would be used. Now a helluva lot more than that is already approved for use and I have the growing, sickening sensation that before the hospital is completed they will be wanting even more than the extra \$2 million which we promised NOT to spend.

First off the system under which architects are paid on the basis of what they spend is immoral, even if it is legal. What half-witted architect would ever make a special effort to design an \$8-million hospital when he is being paid a fixed per cent of each penny he spends and when he knows that there is technically if not morally \$10,775,000 available for such a project. Even an architect has more sense than to under-shoot when he has such a huge and profitable target as that to shoot at. None ever has, none ever will. But building committees are charged with the responsibility of knowing that much about architects and they should be guided accordingly, but none ever is.