

Equality and the Draft

In recent weeks a major concern of every male college student has been brought into the open by leading newspapers and the national magazines. According to **Time**, "Across the U.S., young men are once more watching their local mailboxes for the nation's most unpopular piece of unsolicited mail, that elongated postcard with the blank space after 'class' filled in 1-A." A few days previous to this, General Lewis B. Hershey announced that the Selective Service System is preparing to test between 500,000 and 1 million students in May to determine which would be called first for military service.

Of all the facts that have come to light, there is one which I find most interesting: college math and science majors will have a clear edge over other students in gaining draft deferments. It seems at first, the Selective Service had planned to equalize student's chances but the urgency of the Vietnam war has forced a change. The System will use the same college qualification test given during the Korean war. It is apparent that the System is seeking to defer only the scientific elite.

Again according to **Time**, the charges of unfairness against the draft are widespread - and to a certain extent true. Says General Hershey: "I wouldn't argue with a guy who says we're being unfair when he is taken." Hershey insists that the draft works about as well as it can under the circumstances, but that it was not meant to treat everyone fairly.

In my estimation the test is certainly unfair. If we are to be called to the service of our country, why then are the scientifically minded given the advantage? Of all the justifications I have read, none give a solid reason for this inequality. When the System was asked for a specific description of the new test they said it could be found in the instructions to students in the Korean war test. The instructions give the student no hint of his disadvantage.

They state:

"The Selective Service College Qualification Test examines your ability to read with understanding and to solve new problems by using your general knowledge.

"Some of the questions are based upon reading passages, charts, tables or graphs. To answer these questions, you will not only need to understand the passage, chart or graph, but also to apply general principles in the field of knowledge involved.

"In other questions you will have to solve problems based on the meanings of words and their relationships to other words. There are also mathematical problems designed to test your ability to comprehend and use numerical relationships."

In other words the equality of the liberal arts major is not much more valuable than one over the square root of pi.