

Notes and Comment

By: Frank Torre

As we are getting well into the term the uncertainty of the military draft is looming over our heads once again. The continuing heavy commitment of U.S. troops in Vietnam is sending military manpower needs soaring.

Selective Service officials thus are being forced to make a fresh appraisal of the huge virtually untapped pool of students with an eye toward replenishing the rapidly swindling stock of men available for military service.

Draft calls have climbed steeply to a new post-Korean high of 49,000 for this month. Selective Service Director Lt. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey warns that "we must start looking seriously toward the reclassification of college students."

According to an article which appeared in **Chemical and Engineering News** spokesmen for scientific and engineering professions are voicing concern over the manpower squeeze. Betty M. Vetter, executive secretary of the Scientific Manpower Commission, claims that more and more graduate students are being classified I-A. Although on appeal many of them will revert to their IIS; those who have ever taken time out from their formal education since high school are likely to be placed in I-A.

Mrs. Vetter points out, "At the present two imperative needs appear to be in conflict: the need for adequate military manpower, and the need to continue the process of training and educating specialists needed by society. And both of these needs are focused on the relatively narrow age group between 19 and 26."

The scientific and technical community generally is opposed to

any tampering with the present deferment status of scientists and engineers. It claims that any weakening of that status would aggravate the already serious shortage in these fields. In a policy statement draft prepared in June the Engineering Manpower Commission goes so far as to propose that entry of engineers into the Armed Forces be limited "to the number actually needed for military engineering functions." It holds that engineers, "like members of the healing arts," should be "subject to special call and commissioned in the Armed Forces requiring such specialized personnel."

The Scientific Manpower Commission, which speaks for all the major scientific groups, calls for a "thorough and fundamental look at the relevance of (draft) procedures to the present situation." The present draft law was not designed for a situation of partial mobilization such as exists today. And since we are in a state of partial mobilization of "indefinite duration," SMC says that the continuing needs of society for scientists, engineers, and other specialists "must be given appropriate consideration with those of the military." In particular SMC finds a need for an adequate flow of "reliable information" to the public, to registrants, and to local boards on "policy, on procedure, and on the responsibilities and privileges of registrants."

Our question is this: when will the chemist be able to turn from making napalm to the perfecting of silver iodide seeds for use in snuffing hurricanes, or the engineer from harnessing energy for larger bombs to harnessing atomic energy for peaceful uses. Clearly the goal should be the betterment of mankind not its destruction.