

EDUCATION IN REVIEW

Student Draft-Deferment Curtailment and ASTP Reduction Pose Threat to Colleges

Jan. 30 '44

N.Y. Semia

By BENJAMIN FINE

American colleges during the past week found their war-training and civilian programs attacked on two fronts. New regulations issued by the Selective Service division at Washington severely restricted the deferments to be given college students. This new policy will become effective on Feb. 15. At the same time, it was announced that the Army Specialized Training program would be reduced from a high of 144,000 to 125,000 students, the latter figure to be reached by April 1. The total number, however, may be reduced or increased at any time, depending upon the Army's need for technical specialists.

Potentially even more serious from the educators' point of view is a threat posed by the House Military Affairs Committee. According to reports, this committee may recommend the abolition of most of the specialized training programs. This would take from the college and university campuses more than 200,000 Army and Navy students who are receiving training in engineering, foreign languages, psychology and in other special fields.

However, War Department support for the Army Specialized Training Program and the Navy's V-12 program make it appear unlikely that the reported threat will materialize. Spokesmen said that the training of students for specialized work was essential to the successful prosecution of the war. It was stressed that the Army was not so much concerned with the fate of the colleges as it was with the need for engineers, chemists, physicists and other technical experts.

Short on Professionals

Gen. George C. Marshall, in outlining the aim of ASTP, declared recently that the Army had been handicapped by a shortage of men trained in fields of medicine, engineering, languages, science, mathematics and psychology. He said that the Army had been compelled to make sure that there would be "no interruption in the flow of professionally and technically trained men who have hitherto been provided in regular increments by American colleges and universities."

Army authorities acknowledge that there have been complaints and "spite letters" attacking ASTP. Parents have written to Congressmen, complaining that while a neighbor's son has been sent to college by the Army, their own son has been kept out. Some ASTP trainees and instructors also have criticized the program, calling it unprofessional and wasteful. However, college and university heads regard both ASTP and V-12 as basically sound. Typical of the attitude of educators is this comment by President Raymond Walters of the University of Cincinnati: "The faculty of the University of Cincinnati finds that the Army Specialized Training Program is operating so satisfactorily and the work and spirit of the soldier are so good that

Michael, President of Tufts College. Instead of twenty-two fields of study that have been draft exempt, the number has been cut to five—chemistry, engineering, geology, geophysics and physics. However, students in medical, dental and veterinary schools are not included in the quotas.

The occupation bulletin issued by the Selective Service division states that students in certain scientific and specialized fields who will be graduated by July 1, will be eligible for deferment until graduation. It points out that the Army and Navy training programs are providing enough men in the technical and scientific fields to meet the needs of the armed forces. Therefore, it maintains, students occupationally deferred should be limited to a number "sufficient to meet civilian needs in war production and in support of the war effort." Although the total number of students previously deferred has not been made public, officials admitted that the figure 10,000 was "considerably less" than the student deferments during the past two years.

Home-Front Shortage

Dr. Carmichael said he feared that the new policy would not leave sufficient professionally trained to take care of home-front needs. "We have already cut the personnel far below the minimum of safety," he said. "This is a war of technologists, and unless we get the trained men the armed services will suffer."

Complaints have come to Dr. Carmichael from leading concerns engaged in the war effort that they are suffering from a shortage of technically trained men. As a result, he said, an increasing percentage of loss is being experienced in the production of essential products. "Personnel directors of our largest war production industries are alarmed because they feel that it is impossible to get the necessary men for their plants," he said.

It has been argued by some in Washington that the new deferment regulations were adopted for "sentimental reasons." They hold that the drafting of fathers was a factor that influenced the judgments of those in authority.

With arguments raised on both sides, it would appear that the colleges and universities are once again in the position of not knowing what the future holds for them. Many educators fear that if their potential student body is further depleted, higher education institutions will face a difficult struggle for wartime existence.

we regret any decrease in enrollment as diminishing the service which our colleges and universities are proud to contribute to the Army."

Although the Army training program is less than a year old, 10,000 students have already completed the course and have been assigned to Army commands in all parts of the world. By the end of June 50,000 men will have completed their training.

Because of the reduced number of men to be trained during the coming months, the intake rate of new candidates will drop considerably. However, no student now in the ASTP and doing satisfactory work will be let out.

New Tightening Serious

The tightening by Selective Service of the regulations governing student deferment is regarded by college officials as more serious than the reduction in the number of Army trainees. Business leaders and educators expressed concern that the 10,000 limit on these deferments would not permit the training of sufficient professional men to man the technical concerns of this country now and during the post-war period.

Under the new regulations, the names of the students to be deferred will have to be certified by the War Manpower Commission's National Roster of Scientific and Specialized Personnel, headed by Dr. Leonard Car-