Tom Curtis

"National service another bad idea"

One of the worst ideas ever conceived was that of a peacetime draft. In the Sixties, this idea was responsible for the loss of thousands of lives in Vietnam and the death of millions of dollars since the Civil War. Yet some prominent, influential politicians are seriously suggesting that the peacetime draft be revived.

Leading the way in this direction is Representative John McCloskey, Richard Nixon's only Republican challenger in the 1972 primaries. McCloskey has proposed a "national service" plan in which all 18-year-olds would serve the country, with no exceptions for women as well as men—three options: two years of service in the military; one year of service in a school, hospital, jail, or urban ghetto; or service as a peace corps volunteer for the duration.

On the surface, "national service" seems innocuous. A year of social work might help to develop a sense of social responsibility in teenagers. It would also likely cut teenage unemployment. However, the danger of "national service" is its emphasis on military service. In fact, its primary purpose is to increase the number of military recruits. As such, it is nothing more than a sugar-coated peacetime draft.

Although teenagers who want to avoid the military could choose a year of social work, the plan would force some people to join the military through the peacetime draft. Many 18-year-olds would register for the peacetime draft because of plans such as marriage which would be interrupted by a year of "national service." Other 18-year-olds would avoid immediate service because of the need to get a high paying job to support their family. These people, who come mostly from the lower socioeconomic groups, would be fairly unattracted to the military draft. Such a system of distinctions would make all of the other plans for "national service" impossible. People have ploughed more draft duties including the Vietnam War "peacetime" draft.

Furthermore, many others might register for the draft simply because the risk of being conscripted was very low. If this risk suddenly increased two years later, these people would be unwillingly forced into the military.

The real danger of "national service," however, is what the military would do with the return of this large number of able-bodied youths. The nation would be flooded with young men who have no military background and no experience of other recruitments through the peacetime draft. Would the President or Congress order the Vietnam War "peacetime" draft?

Remarks on foreign policy by too possible Presidential contenders are alarming. Ronald Reagan was quoted in Time as saying: "I'm beginning to learn about the military, I don't think I'm gonna be an ambassador with a flag under his arm climbing into the escape helicopter." Would Reagan have sent a million American troops back to Southeast Asia when the Nixon and Three regimes were collapsing?

Even usually restrained Howard Baker has made some unsettling remarks. Time quoted him as saying: "There is a growing view that America is a tiny and we never retaliate. We do more with someone than someone who ammonia an ambassador. Would Baker send an expeditionary force trudging into Afghanistan?

The lessons of Vietnam should show the military administration, made possible by a peacetime draft, must be avoided in every reasonable way. The time has passed when America can install its choices leaders in the command structures of other nations. There never was a time when America could really control the internal affairs of other countries.

The peacetime draft of "national service" would encourage a return of the military adventurism of the past. The benefits to be gained by having a draft are identical to those gotten through this added danger of national embarrassment. For this reason alone, the peacetime draft is a bad idea.

Fortunately, most observers don't give passage of a "national service" act much of a chance right now. However, as the 1981 elections approach, it is a strong possibility for candidates who are anti-draft diagnosticians argue about the measly accomplishing our foreign policy.

Otherwise, expect unpleasant "greetings" at the beginning of 1981.

Ron Newman

MIT's corporate irresponsibility

When the Technology Community Association made the mistake of putting a gorilla with the subtitle "Harvey Grogo, Kampala, Uganda" in its offices, two years ago, the MIT Administration quickly and forcefully condemned the act as a "racist slur entirely unacceptable in this community."

But in a little-noticed "Statement on South African Investments," printed in the August 16, 1978 Tech Tall, the Executive Committee of the MIT Corporation declared that "in order to make our formal declaration regarding apartheid even though each member of the Executive Committee opposes apartheid in principle and specifically as a policy of the government of South Africa . . . This, according to the Executive Committee, conforms to MIT's "long-standing policy" of "avoiding taking institutional positions on political issues."

Apparently racism in South Africa is, if not entirely "acceptable," at least tolerated by the MIT community. While acknowledging that US corporations should be discouraged from expanding in South Africa, the Executive Committee rejected even the mild recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Shareholder Responsibility (ACSR) that American companies should not sell photographic and computer equipment to the South African government. This is how MIT avoids taking an "institutional position." It lets the companies that it partially owns continue to help South Africa maintain its repressive regime.

"We support MIT's positions of no further loans to the South African government and no expansion of investments there," states Timothy Smith of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility. (Please turn to page 5)

Paul Hubbard

by Kent C. Massey

What path should humanities take?

In the Editor:

Tom Curtis' Tech editorial [February 23] calling for a "more structured humanities re-

civilization" has met with a spirited reply from Steve Wright in the pages of Ergo. The proponent Wright is, not to much the structure of the Humanities Department, but the character of the ideas taught on campus. How, he asks, can M IT students develop a solid ethical code when teachers dwell on the choices one would have to make in a world of situations rather than in those of everyday life? How can students fathom the workings of the national economy when . . . etc? What for humanities department aban-
donned a central point of view, dis-
play a belief in nothing perma-
nent and becoming increasingly sus-
to the fashions of the moment. Students rooted in the belief that human conduct in all re-
er equipment to the South Afri-

can government in a manner con-
forms to MIT's "long-standing policy" of "avoiding taking institutional positions on political issues."

The desire to avoid Hitler's arch-conservative essay prompted a movement to expose the university to radical points of view. In Marx, Keynes, modern art, serial music and other alienated phenomena held by pre-War humanities to repres-
sentations of the ideal values the student must observe if civilization is to flourish.

Substituted for humanistic values was a "progressive" outlook that sought to introduce, change society. The separate and distinct "less for man" and "law for thing" that Emerson speaks of became accelerated, and such concepts as cumulative progress more appropriate to the worlds of science and technology came to be applied to ethics and art.

The result was that the univer-

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