

The Senate Armed Services Committee made its feelings plain on the subject of apprentices, in its report on the draft law extension last May:

"If student deferments are to be continued, the Committee believes that apprentices should be permitted to qualify for deferments under conditions no more restrictive than those applicable to undergraduate college deferments . . . If an apprentice is full time, satisfactory, and making normal progress, he should be eligible for deferment as an apprentice in the same manner as a college student."

Once again, though the legislative history is very plain, the operation of the draft system is at odds with it.

My bill would give each bona fide student the same option: he could enter the draft pool after high school, or after his college or occupational training was completed. The GI bill, liberalized only recently, should spur many individuals to enlist or enter the draft pool right after high school, so that their education costs would be assisted in part under its provisions. But some proportion would undoubtedly prefer to wait until after college, and my bill gives them this flexibility while enhancing the overall equity of the system.

STUDENT POSTPONEMENT DISCONTINUANCE

I have already mentioned that the "timing" argument of offering optional postponements to students for draft purposes requires some mechanism to prevent discrimination against those who do not have to option of going to college or graduate school, for economic or other reasons. This mechanism is a discontinuance of the option whenever Armed Forces casualties reach a certain percentage of the monthly draft call.

During any period when our Armed forces are sustaining combat casualties, the President would be required to determine the total number of combat casualties each month. He would then put this figure beside the total number of registrants drafter that month. If the number of casualties reached 10 percent of the number of draftees, then the operational student postponement would be discontinued. But the discontinuance would take place only when the 10 percent figure was exceeded for 3 consecutive months. And when the discontinuance did take place, it would stay in effect for the following 12 months.

This discontinuance will insure that when draftees face an appreciable risk of being sent off to a shooting war, all young men must stand as equals at that particular time before the draft process. To permit some to elect to enter college, thus postponing exposure to the draft for 4 years, while denying this election to others, would be to continue one of our present system's worst features.

It is important to note that the discontinuance would not apply to students already in college or occupational training when the 10-percent figure was reached. These students made their choice to enter college or training not out of a desire to avoid being drafted into a shooting war, because the shooting had not reached an appreciable extent when their decisions were made. Thus, it would apply only to those whose decisions on whether to take up the option was made in the light of combat casualties.

It is also important to note that even when the 10-percent limit has been reached and the option discontinued, those not actually selected for induction would be free to go on to college, school, jobs, or whatever.

Casualties in Vietnam are running above 10 percent of the draftees. In the first 6 months of 1967, draftees totaled 87,600 and casualties 37,500—or over 40 percent. Consequently, my bill would discontinue the granting of student postponements during the Vietnam war.

This discontinuance provision insures that the option feature is fair.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

That there exists in our draft statute a formal provision exempting conscientious objectors from combat duty is a credit to our democracy. It is legislative recognition that our society is strong enough to accommodate those who cannot in conscience participate in the killing of other men.

Conscientious objection can take either of two forms under the statute, depending on the nature and extent of the objection. A conscientious objector may be assigned to noncombat service in the military, such as in hospitals or in administrative work. Or, he may be assigned to 2 years of civilian work, if he objects to both combat and noncombat military service. A number of this latter group are serving as civilians with voluntary agencies in Southeast Asia.