

## The chill of a draft

The draft was one of many factors shaping what became known as the protest generation. The blind compliance of fathers infuriated sons. The bitter reluctance of sons shocked fathers. There were so many tricks to avoid induction. Wearing women's underwear to a pre-induction physical usually worked — except when most of the other inductees were also wearing women's underwear. There were sympathetic psychiatrists who, for a fee, would write a letter to the draft board claiming you were anything from catatonic to a chronic bed-wetter. Then there was Canada.

cort fernald

## sidelong glances

I was sitting at a corner table in the Imagiste Cafe, Montreal. I was coming down hard. The Stones were singing "You're 2,000 light years from home" on the jukebox. Monty was making time with a young French woman. Every so often he'd glance sidelong at me and hiss "maintain, man." But it was hitting me like a cold palm cracking across my face.

The Imagiste Cafe was a dark and dirty storefront cafe six steps down from Mount Royale Avenue. The red walls seemed to smoke in the dim. Artsy students from McGill University frequented the Imagiste — partly to impress their dates with how easily they moved through the underground. Ex-patriot Americans weren't that welcome in the Imagiste, nor Quebec. The insults flung at me in French and English were only a little less caustic than the crystal's burn in the crook of my elbow. But I was more fortunate than other "black" Americans — I was with Monty — and Monty dealt. That was also my problem.

I been reduced to a quaking skeleton doubled-up on a chair in the corner of a stinking cafe — all of a sudden Montreal had gone dry.

"Wipe your mouth, Cort," Monty wearily said as the woman grimaced looking at me. He didn't have to turn around to know what startled her.

I pushed a sleeve across my cracked lips and smeared the trickle of blood over my cheek. I convulsed and chewed on the bloody pulp that was my tongue.

"You're so very lonely — you're 2,000 light years from home."

It'd been four maybe five months since I'd fled to Montreal. In that time I'd discovered what sorts of bullshit surrounded all sides of the draft.

A woman with panda eyes, wearing a long gray sweatshirt and black leotards, had tried to talk me out of leaving the U.S. She worked for a Quaker group in Chicago and lovingly told of federal marshalls invading the office and carrying off their heroic director. I looked at the doorjamb for fingernail marks. If I went to jail for five years she promised to write me every week.

When I reached Montreal I went to the War Resister's League, thinking they could help me find a job and a place to stay. The fat bearded man behind the desk listened to me while he opened the mail. He made two piles of contributions — stuffing the biggest pile into his pocket. "Sorry, Kid. Can't help ya," he said, dismissing me with a wave.

I saw the dead end sign that night in the Imagiste Cafe. In a few days I got over the sickness and reentered the United States under an assumed name. I applied for conscientious objector status through my draft board in Illinois and immediately left town. Months later a letter was forwarded to me in San Francisco. I had been granted conscientious objector status. I was lucky. I could've stopped living like each day was my last — but I didn't.

*Cort Fernald is the Emerald's editorial page editor. A number of years ago he got up from his leatherette recliner and turned off the television set. He pulled on his gray cardigan sweater and buttoned it over his ample paunch. "I'm going out for a pack of cigarettes," he called to his wife Edna in the kitchen washing the dinner dishes. He rounded the corner, walked down the block, and never looked back.*



## Reagan reneges on draft

By retaining draft registration for 18- to 21-year-olds, Pres. Ronald Reagan contradicted a campaign stance that was highly critical of then Pres. Carter's reinstatement of a draft registration. But it is not surprising when a politician once in office "revises" his campaign views. No one expected Reagan to honor his previous stance and eliminate draft registration. The voices of Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and Secretary of State Alexander Haig persuaded Reagan that rescinding draft registration would illustrate American weakness to the Soviet Union. Although, in Europe, draft registration is viewed as war-mongering by the Reagan administration.

There has been, and always will be, little if any justification other than symbolic for draft registration during peacetime. And it is ironic that the budget-conscious Reagan administration is wasting the taxpayers' money on a program not fully implemented.

Reagan recently said his administration "remains steadfast in its commitment to an all-volunteer defense force." Apparently Reagan's steadfast commitment is not so securely fastened in view of his retaining draft registration. The fact that more than 800,000 18- to 21-year-olds have not complied with registration must have had a hand in motivating continued registration. A grace period has been granted to the delinquent registrants. The penalty for failure to register is five years in jail and \$10,000 fine — but no one as yet has had specific charges brought against them. Meanwhile, anti-draft groups across the country are urging 18- to

21-year-olds not to register, and they are listening.

The forces are shaping up for another battle over the draft. We would think Reagan would note the trend and stick to his spoken determination to make the all-volunteer military successful. The standing armed forces at present strengths are adequate for preliminary defense. The primary concern is with fielding a large-scale emergency force with both speed and efficiency. We submit that the lack of a tangible emergency situation is grounds in itself to eliminate draft registration. When and if a substantial national threat arises the number of volunteers will outstrip draft registrants. Look to the past two world wars — there wasn't an absence of volunteers once a threat to this country became real.

Studies on mobilizing emergency manpower say present draft registration could save nearly six weeks. That figure is almost archaic. It goes without saying that the character of modern warfare is quite different. Modern warfare has greatly reduced the timeframe of previous wars. A war can last anywhere from seven days to 30 minutes with present technology. The six weeks mobilization criteria is laughably moot.

Reagan's retaining of draft registration is a contradiction of his campaign promise and pointless as a measure to ensure a defense force. Besides this, continued draft registration tears the stitches from an old wound that caused bloodshed to be spilled on the streets of America. Are we to fight each other forever over lessons supposedly learned?

## letters

### Complacency?

With all the news on the Polish front, isn't it about time for another Szymanski vs. Wixman and Reynolds debate? Surely Szymanski can produce an article from The New York

Times verifying that Lech Walesa is a CIA agent. And Wixman can certainly come up with some new statistics on how many Uzbekistani Muslims are being repressed in Silesia.

Reynolds can then elucidate on the relative popularity of the Pope vs. Kojack among the

Polish populace.

What has happened to our pro-Soviet anti-Soviet campus factions? Are they growing complacent in their approaching middle age? Come on guys, get off your tushies.

Anne Landgren  
Eugene

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The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during finals week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co.

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Advertising/Business 686-3712  
Classifieds 686-4343  
Production 686-4381

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