


Letters to The Times

9-4-90



■ I wholeheartedly agree with Jerome Karabel's call for universal military service. ("Doctors' Sons Won't Die in the Desert," Commentary, Aug. 30). The moral benefit to the nation would be incalculable.

In 1962, I decided, at the last minute, not to argue my case to be classified as a conscientious objector before my local draft board. I knew that I was not a pacifist and I did not believe that CO status was justified on any other basis.

Later, I saw that whether young men avoided the draft on moral grounds, or simply because they were looking out for their own skins, was irrelevant compared to the moral and intellectual failures by which Washington's "best and brightest" sent America's youth to die in Vietnam.

Karabel is certainly correct in suggest-

ing that politicians are more prone to send our young people abroad—to guarantee our continued access to the resources of other nations—when the sons and daughters of affluent campaign contributors are not among them.

No one denies that the military needs professionals to provide continuity and competence. It also needs a true cross-section of young Americans rotating through the services (through a no-exceptions lottery, for example), so that the parents of our affluent youth will pay more attention when Washington's civilian warriors start talking about sending them to kill and die overseas.

BILL BECKER
West Hills

Letters to the Editor,
Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA 90053

August 31, 1990

Dear Editor,

I wholeheartedly agree with Jerome Karabel's call for universal military service. ("Doctor's Sons Won't Die in the Desert," Jerome Karabel, Op-ed, 8/30) The moral benefit to the nation would be incalculable.

In 1962, I decided, at the last minute, not to argue my case for classification as a conscientious objector before my local draft board. I knew that I was not a pacifist, and I did not ~~then~~ believe that CO status was justified on any other basis.

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"best and brightest"

Karabel is certainly correct in suggesting that ~~America's~~ politicians are more prone to send our ~~youth~~ ^{young people} abroad--to guarantee our continued access to the resources of other nations--when the sons and daughters of affluent campaign contributors are not among them. Today's so-called "volunteer" army, comprised of poor young men and women enticed by promises to make them "all they can be," serves this purpose perfectly. As national moral achievement, it ranks near the bottom.

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The military needs professionals to provide continuity and competence. It also needs a true cross-section of young Americans (through a no-exceptions lottery, for example) so that the parents of our affluent youth will pay more attention when Washington's warriors start talking about sending them to kill and die overseas.

Sincerely,

Bill Becker