

The Army Caste System

Harold V. Selley

THE greatest personnel problem of the United States Army today is the obvious class distinction between the officers and the enlisted men. Many officers will not admit that the situation exists; but enlisted men and officers who were previously enlisted men readily admit it and think that it is a vital issue. Regardless of these divergent opinions, the facts of the matter still remain.

The enlisted man lives in quarters which usually provide inadequate room and contain drab and uncomfortable furnishings; the

officer lives in a private or semi-private room with comfortable furnishings. The enlisted man waits in line for his meals, and then eats poorly prepared food in a crowded mess hall; the officer dines in a private mess hall, often with menus and a choice of selected foods. The enlisted man is subject to a continual cycle of extra labor details; the officer is subject to those only of command functions. The enlisted man often finds he is restricted to the post for no apparent reason; the officer is allowed comparatively complete freedom.

In addition to these outward differences, and oftentimes as a direct result of them, a more important and dangerous problem develops. Officers, particularly the younger ones, tend to assume an attitude of superiority, so that the thoughts and opinions of the enlisted man are disregarded. In turn, the enlisted man feels hurt and resentful. He would like to voice his opinions, but he does not dare. He would like to be recognized as a human being with equality, not regarded as a lowly peon.

Some of the soldiers, especially the draftees, have better educations and higher ideals than the officers do; but they are still considered as inferiors. If the foregoing are not examples of class distinction, then the caste system is a mythical institution.

If we conclude that the class distinction exists in the Army today, consideration must be given to the officers who are imbued with the attitude of superiority. Since the officers who were previously enlisted men have opinions similar to those of the enlisted man, it is apparent that the fault lies with the majority of the officers who are commissioned directly in the Army from a training program. Let us investigate one of these programs:

Units of Reserve Officers Training Corps are set up on college campuses throughout the United States. They afford the individual a chance to further his education, along with the officer training program. The student learns basic military principles, such as drill, weapon firing, and military tactics; but during this training he is in a civilian status and is not a soldier confined to an Army post. Upon completion of his schooling, he enters the Army with a direct commission. He is now an officer with authority and privilege. Consequently he lacks something important. He has not experienced the problems of an enlisted man. He does not know what it is to be ordered to dig a hole six feet deep, to peel potatoes in a mess hall, to go through harassment from officers, and to retire at night in a crowded barracks. Therefore, it is a rare officer of this group who understands the problems of the enlisted man.

I am not condemning the R. O. T. C. program, for I thoroughly believe that it helps to make capable officers of higher intelligence. However, I do not believe that the individual student should be commissioned directly upon completion of school. Instead, I believe that

he should attend an indoctrination course after his R. O. T. C. training. This course should be designed as a basic course, patterned after those attended by enlisted men. It should compel the future officer to serve a period as a private and perform the duties and live in the surroundings of a private. Then, after completing the indoctrination course, he should receive his commission. In this manner, he would be a better qualified and prepared officer—one who would understand his men and probably be highly respected by them.

The Trio of Diminutive Porkers

Alan L. Taylor

THERE ONCE was an elderly female hog who was perceived to have a litter composed of a trio of diminutive porkers. This matron, of whom we speak, had not the sufficient amount of funds to retain them at her lodging, so she dispatched them to go in quest of their opulence. The foremost that advanced came in contact with a personage who was transporting a parcel of thrashed culm. Being an anthropomorphist, the infantine expostulated:

“Kind sir, pray relinquish your encumbrance so that I may construct for myself a domicile.”

The individual with the culm was overjoyed at this solicitation by the junior Marco Polo, and readily relieved himself of the burdensome article. The fugitive from the dinner table then proceeded upon his undertaking, and in less time than it takes to work a trigonometric function, completed his abode.

Pending this interim, the secondary wayfarer encountered a representative of the male species who presented the appearance of being fatigued from his drudgery of conveying a freightage of processed timber. Also exhibiting the characteristics of anthropomorphism, the relative of the proprietor of the culm habitat supplicated:

“Do me the favor of tendering me your impediment so that I may be at liberty to fabricate myself a place of residence.”

Wholeheartedly subscribing to this proposition, the humane individual supplied the porker the necessary material to consummate his acknowledged laborious chore.

Not many measuring units away from this scene, the terminate of the trio was proceeding upon a discourse with an artificer shouldering a hod containing rectangles of fired earth.

“How’s about youse givin’ me them bricks to build me a house with.” (Our third constituent was not possessed of the adroitness of higher cultivated intellectual faculties which his kinsmen boasted.)

Acquiring that which was proffered, the unlettered element of the Suidae family set about the task of erecting a shelter for his private use.