

Yale

ALUMNI MAGAZINE, APRIL 1967



THE EQUITY OF THE DRAFT: WHO IS TO SERVE?

Perspectives on the World

Written by Dane Archer

Photographed by Alberto Lau

Not everyone likes the things Larry Paros does. In fact, Paros infuriates some people. His brain-child -- a controversial program called Perspectives -- has won him more than his share of enemies in the past four years. But Perspectives has won Paros friends too, and has provided him with a far-flung, vocal, and very loyal following. The program has its critics and its champions, but almost no one walks out of a Perspectives session unaffected. And that's the way Larry Paros wants it.

What is Perspectives? It is a Saturday afternoon in the spring with seven hundred area high school students cramming the Yale Law School auditorium to hear Robert Dahl of Yale, or Mayor Richard C. Lee of New Haven, or Abraham Ribicoff, or Alexander Bickel of Yale, or social critic Paul Goodman, or Yale's David Rowe, or Frank Meyer of the *National Review*. Or practically anyone. Perspectives is a high school senior standing in the audience to ask Senator

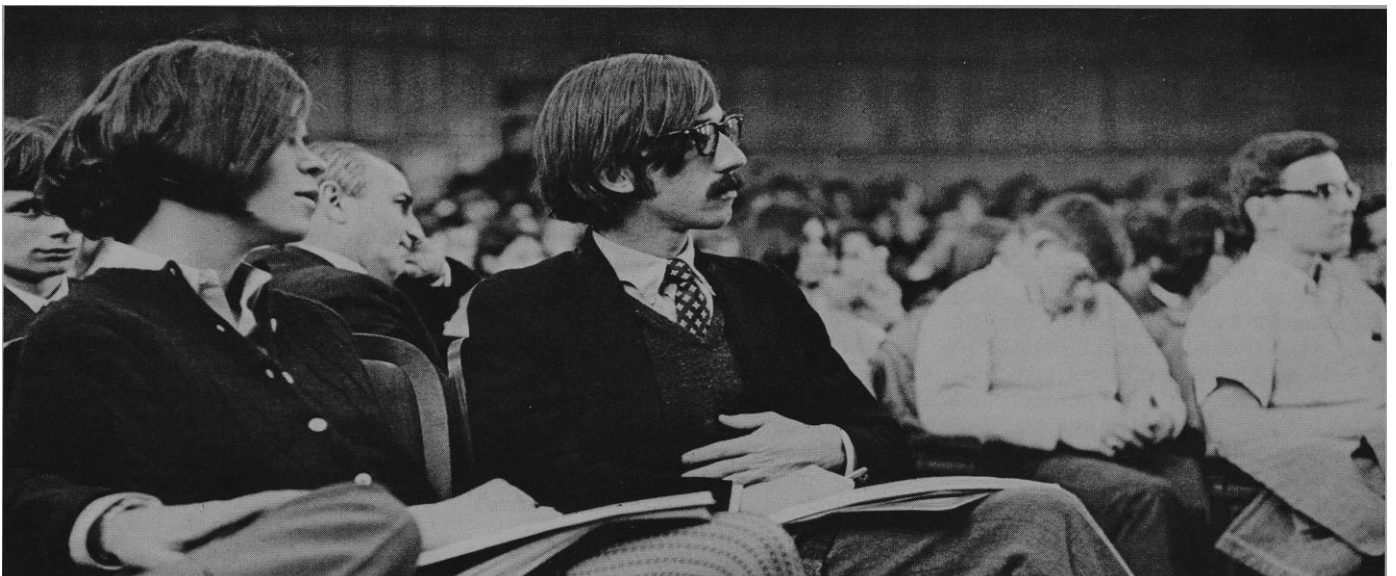
Wayne Morse of Oregon, well, what does he think *will* happen if the United States charts a new course of action in Southeast Asia? And finally, later in the afternoon, the program is a Yale junior moderating an argument in a ten-student seminar between those who favor achieving civil liberties through integration and those who want the Negro to gain these liberties, and his dignity, through separatism.

Perspectives is issues. Paros, originator of the four-year-old program, puts it more exactly: "Issues of controversy and substance are seldom dealt with in the context of school classrooms. Perhaps that's to be expected; schools suffer the handicap of being the handmaiden of society."

What Paros has done, through Perspectives, is to foster out-of-school discussion and examination of the most pressing, complex, and critical issues facing society today. The participating high school students have been

part of Perspectives programs dealing with the crisis in race relations, the plight of the cities, poverty in America, the Cold War, contemporary sexual mores, the role of protest and dissent in society, individual liberty in relation to national security, censorship, the extent to which governments should control, the Cuban situation, and, of course, what to do in Vietnam.

Each session finds proponents of different points of view rolling up their verbal sleeves and squaring off. But it's not a debate, says Paros; "it's a dialogue -- the lifeblood of the educational process." Yale's Richard L. Merritt versus A. J. Muste; William Rusher of the *National Review* versus the Yale Chaplain, William Sloane Coffin Jr.; Percy Sutton, Borough President of Manhattan versus Lincoln Lynch of the Congress of Racial Equality; Julian Bond versus Yale's William Lee Miller; Yale's Bradford Westerfield versus Senator Wayne Morse, and many more.





Larry Paros, principal architect of the Perspectives program, in four years has helped to expose roughly 16,000 high school students to debate over dozens of compelling social issues. "Kids can't get this kind of thing anywhere else," he says.

But there is another dialogue and one which, in the final result, is infinitely more powerful, and important than the one crackling in the Law School auditorium. And that dialogue, says Paros, is the one running among and inside the seven hundred Perspectives students.

What Perspectives is trying to do, says Paros, is "to break the monolithic, schoolmarm approach to education and to provide a forum, a marketplace for the free exchange of ideas." The marketplace is threefold: first, the students hear the on-stage dialogue between opposing speakers; second, they interrogate -- often spiritedly--their captive speakers with questions from the floor; and third, they recess into seminar groups of ten or fifteen scattered among classrooms around the University which are moderated by a Yale undergraduate, a law student, or, in some cases, by an interested member of the New Haven community.

The numbers are impressive. Perspectives brings together students from thirty area schools -- public, private, and parochial; it attracts thirty volunteer seminar leaders -- mostly Yale undergraduate and graduate students; and, competing with spring, baseball, and Saturday picnics, it continues to fill to overflowing the Yale Law School auditorium. Perspectives conducts an average of eight sessions annually for a total attendance each spring of well over four thousand.

Perspectives began over coke and potato chips when Paros was teaching mathematics and history at Hamden High School. One evening a week, he moderated an informal study group that mixed issues and arguments with their snacks. In those days, Paros counted himself a success if he could cultivate an interest in and an analytic approach to contemporary issues among a handful of his students.

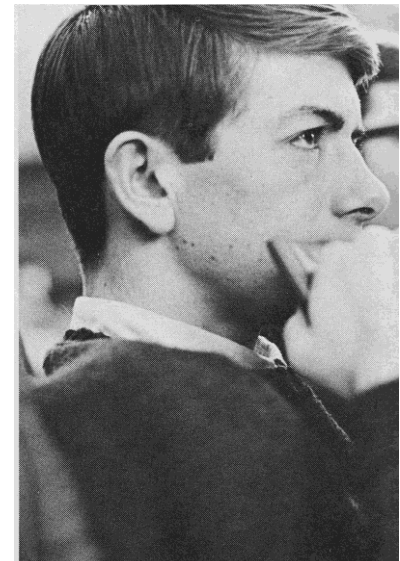
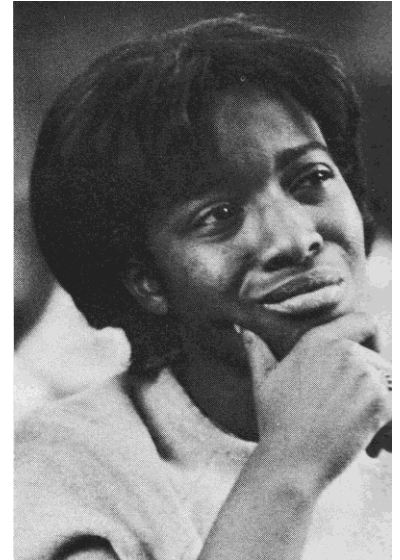
Attentiveness is a hallmark of Perspectives sessions. "The object of the program," say Paros, "is to sustain and encourage a dialogue—the lifeblood of the educational process." If the speakers agree, says, "the program falls flat."

Drawing together students from thirty area high schools – public, private and parochial – Perspectives offers a full afternoon of intellectual involvement in social issues. Says Paros: "Perspectives tries to break the monolithic, schoolmark approach to education and to provide a forum, a marketplace for the free exchange of ideas"

But when he came to Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, Paros decided to try something like the study group on a much larger scale. After some consultation, Yale and the New Haven school system agreed to support Perspectives jointly. Yale would provide the physical space necessary to house the program (and, informally, would furnish speakers and seminar leaders). With money made available by the Ford Foundation, the New Haven school system agreed to supply the little additional money that was needed to pay the expenses and honoraria of out-of-town speakers. For the most recent series, Perspectives '67, the New Haven school system and the New Haven Foundation together provided Perspectives with its "shoestring" budget.

No one in Perspectives is salaried, and the program's fee for guest speakers has occasionally been a source of great amusement. Paros once telephoned an eminent speaker to invite him to take part in a Perspectives session and asked what sort of honorarium the speaker usually received. The speaker replied that his expenses and fees generally came to five hundred dollars. After an awkward silence, Paros asked, "Well, will you speak for seventy-five dollars?" At that, says Paros, the speaker laughed non-stop for five minutes. But he came.

And they keep coming. Leaning heavily on members of the Yale faculty, Perspectives has provided roughly sixty national, state, university, and local speakers. Paros himself contacts potential Perspectives guests and has found, somewhat to his own surprise, that nationally prominent figures are more than willing to address high school students. "Most speakers," says Paros, "sense a refreshing lack of the cynicism which often characterizes older audiences."



The reputation and stature of the program's speakers are, in turn, a powerful drawing card for both students and seminar leaders.

"Perspectives constantly amazes me," said one Yale junior, a seminar leader. "Paros somehow convinces some of the best-known political personalities and most gifted speakers to address area high school students. I have no idea how he does it."

Neither does anyone else, Paros included. But Perspectives is still growing. Each year, Paros himself decides on topics for the Perspectives sessions, and he generally ends up with issues that concern him as much as his students. "Sometimes," Paros said, "it almost seems like I'm setting up an ideal program for myself as well as for the Perspectives audience." Next, Paros chooses potential speakers and sets out to persuade them to attend.

His salesmanship has paid handsome dividends. But during the actual sessions, he carefully limits his own participation to that of verbal referee. Paros introduces both speakers and explains the rules of the dialogue: generally one opening statement per speaker, then a rebuttal of the opponent's remarks or position, and finally the open period of questions from the floor.

But all of this bears the unmistakable mark of one man. Perspectives' originator is also its director, and Larry Paros is without question the *sine qua non* of the program. This has its obvious blessings - in terms of Paros' creative energy and abilities-but also its dangers.

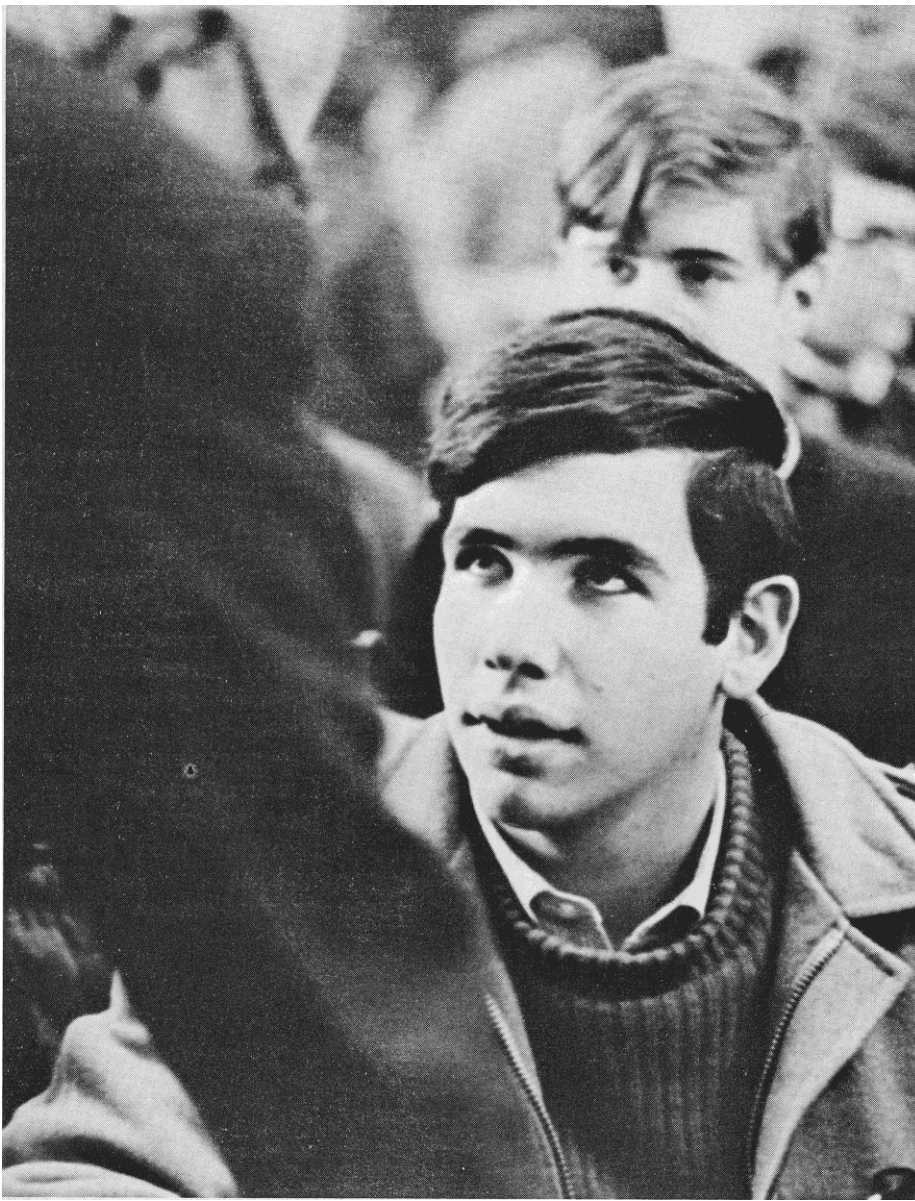
The man behind Perspectives is thirty-three years old. Married and the father of two children, Paros is a 1955 graduate of the University of Massachusetts; in 1958 he received an M.A. degree in international relations from Yale. To date, Paros has completed all the work for his Yale doctorate in international relations except for his dissertation, now in progress.

He began teaching in 1955, in mathematics, but soon felt that he wanted "to escape Euclid for a while," and he switched to history. Since 1963 Paros has been chairman of the history department at New Haven's Wilbur Cross High School.

Paros has built Perspectives almost single-handedly and from scratch. No one -- not even his critics -- slights him on that count. But Perspectives deals in controversy. And whenever one man is the architect of a controversial program, there is always the chance that, unless he is scrupulously conscientious, his own persuasions and convictions may creep in unannounced. There is always the chance, that is, that he may unconsciously stack the deck in his favor. Paros knows this. In the planning stages of each program, he works hard to give the right kind of balance to each session. Ideology, speaking ability, and position on the political spectrum -- all these must be paired. Once on stage, Paros is an inscrutable master of ceremonies.



Senator Wayne Morse addresses a Saturday Perspectives meeting. "The students," notes Paros, "have to mesh their preconceived images and stereotypes of national figures with the flesh-and-blood person standing behind the lectern."



There is no question of the interest Perspectives generates among the students. Invariably, they take advantage of the program to question the guest speakers spiritedly and at length.

Strictly speaking, Perspectives is more than a one-man enterprise. The program's advisory board includes Louis Pollak, Orville J. Sweeting, the Reverend William Sloane Coffin Jr., Elting E. Morison, Thomas I. Emerson -- all from Yale -- social critic Paul Goodman, and Rabbi Robert E. Goldberg. One of these men, Louis Pollak, dean of the Yale Law School, has spoken before a Perspectives audience and is warm in his endorsement. "It is terribly invigorating and refreshing," Pollak said, "to meet high school students directly. They possess a very real concern about vital issues of the day."

Perspectives, he added, both reflects and helps create a very significant trend in students generally. "Young people," said Pollak, "are far more widely informed than they ever have been before." In Connecticut, he noted, there has been much recent, serious discussion about lowering the voting age. Student interest in and profit from a program like Perspectives probably indicates that such a change in voting eligibility "would enfranchise a group very prepared to vote intelligently."

But Perspectives, he says, apparently accomplishes much more and, from the point of view of the co-sponsoring New Haven school system, much of a more tangible nature. "Perspectives was intended," said Pollak, "not to replace in any way classroom instruction, but to complement it profitably." Letters from high school teachers, he added, "are high in their praise and note a genuine pay-off in the home school classrooms."

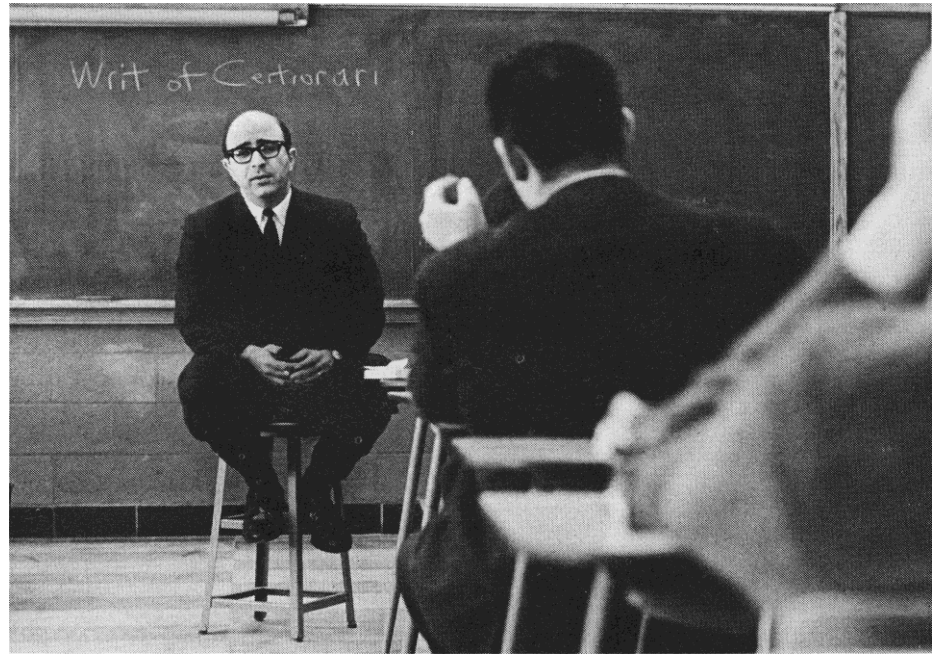
Sister Peter Claver, O.P., of Saint Mary's High School, agrees. "Perspectives," she said, "has been for the students of the greater New Haven area stimulating and intellectually challenging, creating in those attending a real awareness of national and international problems. It has been a tribute to Paros and to the city of New Haven that such a dynamic program has been made available to our young adults." She added, "How



A history teacher in New Haven, Paros brings to his own classes the same energies and abilities that have made Perspectives successful. Many teachers note that the out-of-school program has important in-school effects: students remain interested in and concerned about broad social issues.



Paros says: "Schools suffer then handicap of being the handmaidens of society."



good it is that students learn to respect the right of others to hold opposing opinions and to evaluate those opinions and come to judgments personally after spirited discussion and debate."

To Yale Chaplain Coffin, Perspectives represents a refreshingly new and relevant focus. "Most academic communities," he notes, "deal with the conjunction of the past and the present. Perspectives centers on the conjunction of the present and the future." In an age characterized by "opinions galore but a paucity of convictions," says Coffin, Perspectives manages to attract men with both convictions and commitments. "When a speaker has strong convictions," adds Coffin, "it is not necessary that he convert or persuade his listeners, but only that he encourage them to face up to their own convictions."

But, he adds, while the debate format of the session undeniably makes for dramatic and lively exchange, "it also tends to polarize the audience and simply lines people up behind their champion to get better ideas to buttress things they already believed in." As to student reaction to Perspectives, says Coffin, the overflowing Law School auditorium speaks for itself.

"The Perspectives series," said one area

high school senior, "really showed how much teenagers are interested in learning without being forced." He went on: "To discontinue Perspectives would be to deprive the young people of the area of a great experience." Said another student, a junior at a private school in New Haven, "Perspectives has made a very real contribution; students in New Haven generally have very few opportunities to discuss freely questions of importance." Said a third, a sophomore at a New Haven parochial school, "I think Perspectives genuinely helped me to open my mind; the program was great!"

But there are problems. And critics. Perspectives' budget (well under three thousand dollars) is still pending as far as next year's program is concerned. And at least one New Haven newspaper has suggested that persuasions slightly to the "left" of present White House policies have been numerically better represented

in the .program than those on the "right."

And every year at this time, says Paros, when the din of the last round of student applause for Perspectives' last speaker has faded from the Yale Law School, he "spends a lot of time just collapsing." But he is still very interested. After all, says Paros with a shrug, "Kids can't get this kind of thing anywhere else."

Next spring, if Perspectives is financed again, chances are students will continue to spend several of their Saturday afternoons arguing in front of the Law School. One will think Speaker X was very wrong and had an outmoded or illogical approach to issue Z. His friend will disagree and think that, no, Speaker X was being practical, and it was Speaker Y who was off-track. They may continue to think differently, and may never agree on any Perspectives issue. But that's fine with Larry Paros. Just as long as they don't stop thinking.