

WHY END THE DRAFT

Questions & Answers

1. What is wrong with conscription?

Compulsory military service is always a severe deprivation of civil liberties. It removes young men from their homes, occupations, education and families for long periods of time. It deprives young men of the essential condition of freedom: the direction and control of their own lives.

Military conscription lets the government exercise virtually unlimited control over the individual. He is compelled to engage in activities which he may find morally repugnant, contrary to his beliefs.

2. Can there never be a draft?

The ACLU insists that proponents of conscription must carry the burden of justifying the need for the government to force an individual into military service. There may be times when the national need for self-preservation requires citizens to temporarily strip themselves of some liberties in the interests of meeting a graver evil. But such deprivation of liberty through conscription may be warranted only by the overriding need of national security in time of war or the imminent danger of war.

3. Hasn't there always been a draft?

No. The first national draft was instituted at the time of the Civil War and it ended when that war ended. Next came the World War I draft. It too ended when the war ended.

The present draft has been continuously in effect (except for a 15 month hiatus in 1947-48) ever since 1940. Originally enacted when the prospect of United States entry into World War II loomed ominously, conscription has now been with us almost constantly for 30 years. Until the present draft, conscription was always regarded as a temporary expedient to meet an emergency. Unfortunately, it is now taken for granted by many persons as a natural part of life. Men now subject to the draft have never known a time when it did not exist.

Today's blind acceptance of the deprivations of liberty inherent in conscription is a far cry from the attitude towards the draft which previously prevailed in the United States. Daniel Webster called the draft "despotism embraced in its worst form."

4. Wouldn't an end to the draft leave the United States defenseless?

No. Even if one assumes that it is necessary to maintain as many men in the armed forces as presently serve, it would only take a relatively small expenditure to bring about a comparably large all-volunteer force.

The most authoritative information on the costs of a volunteer army are contained in the February 1970 report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (the Gates Commission).^{*} The Gates Commission based its study on the assumption that forces would have to be maintained at or near present levels and reached the unanimous conclusion "that the nation's interests will be better served by an all-volunteer force."

Of course, there are many people who believe that defense of the nation does not require such large forces. They argue that in today's world, the defenses of the United States are not measured by the number of men in the armed forces but depend on the nation's planes, ships, submarines, missiles and weapons. Those holding this view regard large armed forces primarily as instruments of foreign policy enabling the nation to undertake such military ventures as the war in Vietnam.

Whether or not one believes that the United States requires large armed forces, a system of military conscription cannot be justified.

5. How much would an all-volunteer force cost?

The Gates Commission estimates that the added budget required to maintain a fully voluntary force on a stable continuing basis is: \$1.5

**The Gates Commission was created by President Nixon in March 1969. It was headed by Thomas Gates, former Secretary of Defense. Among its members were Generals Alfred Gruenther and Lauris Norstad, both former Supreme Allied Commanders in Europe. The Commission had a large staff, its study had the cooperation of the Defense Department and other federal agencies and on February 20, 1970, it issued its findings in a 211 page report supporting an all-volunteer armed force.*

billion for a 2,000,000 man force, \$2.1 billion for a 2,500,000 man force, \$4.6 billion for a 3,000,000 man force.

These figures should be compared with a present national budget of about \$225 billion.

Moreover, the Gates Commission pointed out, "Although the *budgetary expense* of a volunteer armed force will be higher than for the present mixed force of volunteers and conscripts, the *actual cost* will be lower. This seemingly paradoxical statement is true because many of the costs of manning our armed forces today are hidden and are not reflected in the budget. Men who are forced to serve in the military at artificially low pay are actually paying a form of tax which subsidizes those in the society who do not serve. Furthermore, the output of the civilian economy is reduced because more men serve in the military than would be required for an all-volunteer force of the same strength. This cost does not show up in the budget. Neither do the costs borne by those men who do not serve, but who rearrange their lives in response to the possibility of being drafted. Taking these hidden and neglected costs into account, the actual cost to the nation of an all-volunteer force will be lower than the cost of the present force."

How much would volunteers have to be paid? If the Gates Commission's recommendations are put into effect, the average level of basic pay in the first two years of service would go from \$180 to \$315 a month (in addition to food, lodging, clothing and fringe benefits). Working and living conditions would be improved, additional pay would go to people with special skills, and the basic pay of officers would also be raised.

6. Would an all-volunteer force be flexible enough to respond rapidly to a crisis?

The Gates Commission answered: "Military preparedness depends on forces in being, not on the ability to draft untrained men. Reserve forces provide immediate support to active forces while the draft provides only inexperienced civilians who must be organized, trained and equipped before they can become effective soldiers and sailors—a process which takes many months."

7. Does the draft serve purposes other than delivery of manpower to the armed forces.

Yes. An internal Selective Service System memorandum, "Manpower Channeling," which was written in 1965, is unusually frank in discussing the purposes of the draft. The memorandum states that:

"Delivery of manpower for induction, the process of providing a few thousand men with transportation to a reception center, is not much of an administrative or financial challenge. It is in dealing with the other millions of registrants that the System is heavily occupied, developing more effective human beings in the national interest."

This function of the draft is known as "channeling." The Selective Service System memorandum explains how the draft channels men by "the club of induction":

"Many young men would not have pursued a higher education if there had not been a program of student deferment. Many young scientists, engineers, tool and die makers, and other possessors of scarce skills would not remain in their jobs in the defense effort if it were not for a program of occupational deferments . . ."

A free people does not willingly delegate to a governmental agency the right to so manipulate individual lives. The Selective Service System began "channeling" shortly after the Korean War when demands for men in the armed services were very low and the System turned its attention to what it has described as the "problem of how to control effectively the service of individuals who are not in the armed forces." Ending the draft would also end this power of the System to manipulate lives of civilians.

8. Aren't there dangers in a professional armed force?

We already have professional armed forces. More than 2 million of the men in military service are true volunteers (not just men who volunteer because of the draft). The armed services are dominated by a large professional officer corps. It is hard to believe that draftees, who come into military service at the lowest level, in circumstances where their lives are subject to almost total control and discipline of men with

longer service and of higher rank, significantly diminish any of the dangers which may exist in a professional army. The influence of the military on the draftee is likely to be very much greater than the influence of the draftee on the military.

The draft provides a large professional army with a source of cheap manpower. That professional army takes pride in its capacity to indoctrinate and train draftees to perform the tasks assigned to them. The military institution is carefully designed to prevent any effective challenge to the control of the professionals.

9. Wouldn't an all-volunteer armed force be comprised of mostly the black and the poor?

The Gates Commission's research indicates that the percentage of blacks in a mixed force of conscripts and volunteers (such as we now have) will soon be 14 per cent, and in an all-volunteer force it would be 15 per cent. The Commission's research indicates also that an all-volunteer force would not differ significantly from the current force in economic background.

Among the reasons are:

1) Men who have suffered from poor education or inadequate health care are much more likely not to meet the mental and physical criteria for enlistment. Also, most arrests involve the poor and the black. Large numbers are disqualified because of criminal records.

2) The growth of negative attitudes to military service in the black community and other minority communities.

3) Pay raises would attract larger numbers of middle class men.

4) Demands for technical knowledge are increasing. Already, six out of every seven servicemen have high school diplomas.

Of course, those blacks and poor people who do join the armed forces will do so as a consequence of free choice and would be paid better than conscripts.

10. What about National Service?

National service is no answer to the hardships imposed on military draftees. It would conscript everyone and, therefore, would be a much larger invasion of liberty than the present

draft. The problem of the draft should be dealt with by measures to enlarge liberty rather than measures to diminish liberty.

Forced labor for the state by millions of young people could never bring out the idealism that went into such volunteer programs as the Peace Corps and Vista. Voluntary participation in these programs has been crucial to their effectiveness.

11. What is the "zero draft"?

The "zero draft" implies that the machinery of draft registration would remain intact *and* executive authority to implement the draft would remain intact. The administration could decide to draft men at any time. The zero draft would continue to make draftees an available source of manpower for a President to use in military ventures abroad in implementation of foreign policy.

12. Is a congressionally implemented draft better than a presidentially implemented draft?

Yes. It would help prevent a repetition of such ventures as the war in Southeast Asia in the absence of congressional approval.

With a congressionally implemented draft, the machinery for draft registration would remain intact. At any time, Congress could pass legislation to restart the draft. The President could not call up men on his own and would probably have to seek congressional approval before committing large numbers of troops abroad.

The Gates Commission favored a stand-by draft (that is, the machinery of draft registration) which could be activated by Congress upon request of the President.

13. Would there be side benefits to ending the draft?

Yes. Domestic turmoil would be reduced. Much of recent protest activity has been aimed at the draft, and the draft has been used as a weapon to punish dissent. An end to the draft would remove an important source of unrest in high schools, colleges and in the nation at large.

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