

SANE
318 Massachusetts Ave. NE
Washington, D.C.

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SANE Background Statement on
Compulsory National Service

A Gallup poll of July 5, 1970, testing public opinion on the desirability of drafting young male Americans into a period of compulsory national service of a military or civilian nature, revealed that 71% of the American public favors such a program. While recognizing that such a plan may encourage initial idealistic reactions SANE is appalled that legislators and citizens alike have failed to understand the inherent dangers of such a system.

In an attempt to detail these dangers within the framework of a consistent policy base, SANE reiterates its long-standing policies on the draft and compulsory national service.

In 1966, in a policy statement supporting voluntary military service, SANE stated:

"...SANE is also opposed to universal military training or any variant thereof which makes compulsory demands on the nation's youth. While lauding and supporting assistance programs such as the Peace Corps as representing the best in American neighborly and humane traditions, we believe the value of these programs would be vitiated by their becoming another aspect of compulsory service."

In elaboration, SANE stated, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in April, 1967:

"National Service would not end the inequities of the draft, but would compound them. Under Universal National Service all young men and women above a specified age would be drafted, and within the manpower requirements of the Department of Defense, non-military alternatives would be permitted to conscripts. In some versions, non-military service would be a voluntary alternative above the needs of the Department of Defense. A system of deferments would still exist, selection for actual military duty would proceed very much on the same basis as at the present, with its accompaniment of economic, class and educational differentiations. Nor is there any way at all of equating non-military service in activities which do not involve violence, killing and loss of life or limb.

"Purely on the basis of practicality, Universal National Service is a nightmare. It entails finding useful work for approximately one million men a year, and close to two million women per year. Assuming a three-year term for men and two years for women, a pool of around 7 million people would be available for national service. There would be no jobs available and no money with which to pay them. Universal National Service would be a gigantic latter-day WPA with all its social ills and abuses.

"The success of the Peace Corps and similar activities rests fundamentally on the individual motivation and volition leading to the desire to perform unselfish services for the good of others. There is no possibility that a system of conscription would be responsive to this motivation. It would, in fact, be destroyed by a system of coercion.

- (6.) The Act would discriminate against young men who, if unable to find a job among the positions accredited by the Agency, would be placed in a Civilian Service Corps to work on federally-subsidized work projects. It is obvious that the majority of those unqualified for regular civilian service (where there is at least some choice of area of service) would be from the nation's undereducated and underprivileged.
- (7.) Individuals who found themselves in good conscience and with honorable precedent unable to participate in a system of national service would be required, as under the present system, to prove their case through hearings and appeals. The onus of proof is on the objector rather than on the Agency.
- (8.) If it is judged that there are not enough men in the military manpower pool, this legislation would permit the inclusion in the lottery of those who have completed their civilian service. Thus, some men could be subject successively to civilian and military service.