

“Don’t reform the draft -
get rid of it.”

by Dr. George Wald



National
Council to

REPEAL THE DRAFT

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What is upsetting our campuses are the real and terrifyingly large and difficult problems besetting our whole society. One of these has a special impact on the campus. That is the draft.

Nothing now so poisons academic life in America as the draft. To draft about 400,000 men each year, we keep about 5 million young men between the ages of 19 and 26 continuously on tenterhooks. And don't think the young women aren't there, too! Our entire younger generation, students, and even more nonstudents, is kept in a continuous state of insecurity and uncertainty, unable to plan their lives.

Almost all the students I teach were born since World War II. Just after World War II, a series of new and abnormal procedures came into American life. We regarded them at the time as temporary aberrations. We thought we would get back to normal American life some day.

But those procedures have stayed with us now for more than 20 years, and those students of mine have never known anything else. They think those things are normal. They think we've always had a Pentagon, that we have always had a big army and that we always had a draft. But those are all new things in American life, and I think that they are incompatible with what America meant before.

A peacetime draft is the most unAmerican thing I know. All the time I was growing up, I was told about oppressive Central European countries and Russia, where young men were forced into the army, and I was told what they did about it. They chopped off a finger, or shot off a couple of toes; or better still, if they could manage it, they came to this country. And we understood that, and sympathized, and were glad to welcome them.

Now, by present estimates, 4,000 to 6,000 Americans of draft age have left this country for Canada, another 2,000 or 3,000 have gone to Europe and it looks as though many more are preparing to emigrate.

There are choices in getting rid of the draft. I think that when we get rid of the draft, we must also cut back on the size of the armed forces. It seems to me that in peacetime a total of one million men is surely enough.

I don't think we can live with the present military establishment and its \$80-100 billion a year budget and keep America anything like we have known it in the past. It is corrupting the life of the whole country. It is buying up everything in sight: industries, banks, investors, universities, and lately it seems also to have bought up the labor unions.

I say that the Vietnam war is just an immediate incident, because so long as we keep that big an army, it will always find things to do. If the Vietnam war stopped tomorrow, with that big a military establishment, the chances are that we would be in another such adventure abroad or at home before you knew it.

Dont' reform the draft - - get rid of it.

Dr. George Wald is Professor of Biology at Harvard and a 1967 Nobel laureate. He also is a sponsor of the National Council to Repeal the Draft.