

NATIONAL COUNCIL TO REPEAL THE DRAFT

101 D Street S.E.

Washington D.C. 20003

202/544-2041

LET US REPEAL THE DRAFT NOW!

W H Y ?

The draft is a cause and an effect of a growing trend in America to rely on military solutions and to increase the power of the military sector. Without peacetime conscription, the United States could not wage major wars like Vietnam unless Congress declared them. With the draft repealed, U.S. leaders will not be so tempted to escalate conflicts because the draft provides them with a limitless supply of conscript soldiers. Foreign policy making would be restored rightfully to the Congress.

The draft is a form of involuntary servitude, forbidden by the Constitution except in time of war. It is not in step with the American tradition of voluntarism, and it is not consistent with the principle of individual freedom. Many immigrants came to America to escape conscription in Europe. Richard Flacks, a professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, says, "I do not see how it can be denied that the institution of conscription by definition is alien to a genuinely free society." In addition, any draft is by its very nature unjust. General Hershey said: "It is inevitably unfair. By any definition we don't have uniformity and I don't know how you get it."

The draft is a major tool of the modern state to exert its power over the population through a registration and control of movement which the citizenry would hardly accept otherwise. Kenneth Boulding, professor of economics at the University of Colorado, calls it "...the threat system of the state turned back on its own citizens." As America becomes involved in unpopular wars, she increasingly depends on force to get men to fight them. As dissent grows, the draft may become a symbol of the illegitimacy of the American nation-state, and an enemy of survival to the very values and nation it claims to defend.

The draft is a hidden tax imposed on the men who serve, depriving them of their rightful salary as well as interrupting their professional training. Under this system (even a lottery), individuals from poor families are made to pay out of proportion to their incomes for the "defense" of the country. If the nation is to keep 3.7 million men under arms, let business and the whole country pay the proper price for it. If they must pay, perhaps they will be more easily reminded of the real costs.

W H Y N O T "R E F O R M" ?

The purpose of reforms is to make the system more efficient, hence dimming the chances of any outright repeal at a later time, and making that time more remote. The reforms -- including the various lotteries suggested -- do not at all remove the basic evils of the system. To do

that, the draft must be repealed entirely -- including the vehicle for registration, the extremely antiquated and unjust Boards of Selective Service. A few of the inequities of the present law are removed by the lottery but the fact remains that many will continue to serve and die involuntarily while others are left free. Senator Mark O. Hatfield on the subject: "Should the U.S. move to legalize lotteries with young men's lives? It is wrong whether we substitute Lady Luck for General Hershey or not!"

Some have suggested that repeal would mean a mercenary army of professionals, and would endanger American freedoms. In the first place, an end to conscription would ensure that the army would be kept down to a size inappropriate for aggression. In the second place, ample civilian controls could be created at every level to provide watchdogs against the military and to ensure the common soldier of his citizen's rights. West Germany today has such a system because the American military feared a return to Naziism and created the proper checks to prevent it. The fact is, the decision-makers in today's military and Defense Department are under no responsible civilian check whatsoever, and the real military power already rests in the hands of a professional military and military-bureaucrat core.

Others stress that only repeal is possible because America must maintain flexible strength to meet modern threats. A major land-war threat is not likely and could be met as in the past by Congressional action. Specific area threats (like the Berlin Wall, the Middle East) require an additional call-up of only a few men who can be moved from inactive duty or shifted from domestic bases. A nuclear threat would in any case not require a sudden increase in men! The only type of "flexibility" remaining is that required in the counter-revolutionary struggle like that in Vietnam, where advisors become police action becomes limited struggles becomes war. One of the chief reasons for abolishing the draft is to prevent such "flexibility" without the authorization and full knowledge of the American people.

W H Y N O W ?

After several years of growing resentment of the draft and increasing public discussion of the issue (long thought dead by the military), the President and military have taken their cue to introduce their own proposals. These advocate taking nineteen-year-olds first -- in the name of fairness, but really because this has been urged by the military as more efficient. Nevertheless, as little will be done as possible, and there is evidence to indicate that the fanfare connected with the proposals may have been primarily to give the public an impression of change. Nixon's Gates Commission has not announced hearings, and there seems no chance of hearings or any action in Congress this year. In 1971 however, the present Selective Service law lapses, and some modified version of the presently proposed but extremely inadequate lottery reform is likely before then. Now may be the last time to promote a full discussion of military and foreign policy in connection with conscription, and to move for a return to America's long tradition of a real citizen's army: a voluntary one, a defensive one, and one which is not kept standing in peacetime! Once the draft is re-instated in slightly changed form, the power of the military will be even more strongly entrenched.

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H O W ?

The NATIONAL COUNCIL TO REPEAL THE DRAFT was set up in spring 1969 by unofficial representatives from nearly 40 national organizations. The NCRD is supported by groups and individuals from the church, peace movement, labor, women's organizations, student movement -- from every part of American life. NCRD feels its first task is to organize every area in this nation in a vast educational campaign to bring the facts to the public. This will mean conferences, radio-TV-newspaper publicity and discussion, leafletting, petition campaigns and other such devices to get public attention. A further key will be the endorsement of repeal by national organizations of every type. Draft repeal and the NCRD cut across all political, religious, and ethnic lines to appeal to liberals, radicals, conservatives, and moderates everywhere who remain consistent on the central issue of freedom.

After the educational campaign begins to move, lobbying efforts will focus attention on Congress and on the Gates Commission. Wherever possible, hearings before Congress, in Washington and before Congressmen in local districts, will be encouraged and testimony given. The NCRD is an attempt to unify all support for repeal so the chance will not be missed this time!

H O W C A N Y O U H E L P ?

The Council needs local organizers and workers everywhere and urgently. There will be a time when letters to editors and to Congressmen will be called for, but since these are best timed appropriately, it is necessary for you to send your name to the national or regional committee for later appeals.

Just now the most urgent need is financial support. As an individual, you are urged to send us as large a personal contribution as you can afford. We hope your group will be able to send us a sizeable contribution, and will include us in the annual budget for the coming year. We especially hope your group will officially endorse draft repeal, urge such endorsement at every level of the organization, and send us statements of endorsement.

Please help! The cause is compelling, and the time to act is now!

FOR PEACE AND A FREER NATION!

Thomas C. Reeves
National Director
August 1969

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Please fill in and mail this form to us as soon as possible:

INDIVIDUAL'S NAME: _____

GROUP NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

(zip)

CONTRIBUTION: _____

ANNUAL BUDGET WILL INCLUDE ITEM: _____ AMOUNT: _____

NOTICE OF RESOLUTION OF ENDORSEMENT OF DRAFT REPEAL:

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