

May 1 is "Resist The New Draft" day!

STOP THE NEW DRAFT!

THE BODY SNATCHERS ARE BACK!

And you thought the *Invasion of The Body Snatchers* was only a movie! A growing chorus of politicians, military men and study groups is intoning the need for some form of compulsory national service. The government is staking out its claim to anywhere from three months to two years of your life.

Congressman Pete McCloskey of California and Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia have proposed legislation to create a national service system. A study funded by the Ford Foundation recommended that every red-blooded American youth give at least one year of service--military or civilian--to the nation. But most ominous of all was President Carter's request for \$5 million to rev up the standby draft system. Defense Secretary Harold Brown told the Senate Armed Services Committee that what's left of the Selective Service System is not capable of mobilizing enough manpower in the event of a war.

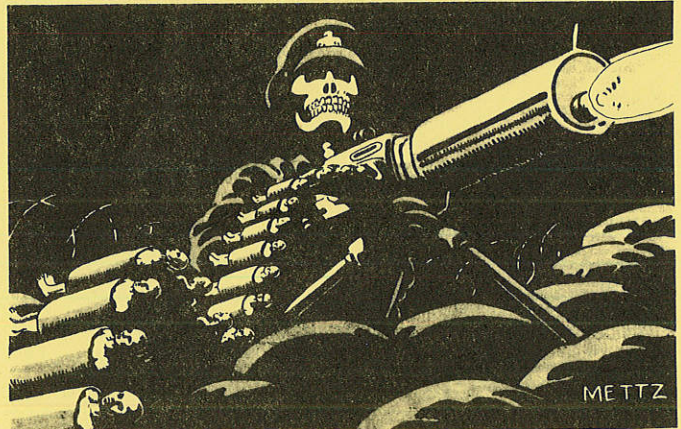
How does it fell to be a **National Resource**?

Humor aside, there are serious and deep-seated reasons for the pressure to revive conscription. The US government is undergoing a major crisis--a disequilibrium that spans foreign policy, defense spending, the economy, energy, and other parts of our thoroughly militarized economy. The issue is more than involuntary servitude. It ties economics, civil liberties and foreign policy together into a major conflict that may determine whether the United States will take the path of freedom or statism.

The United States has troops in over one hundred foreign nations. We sell arms and give millions in foreign "aid" to practically every country outside the communist orbit. Moreover, our access to resources in the third world does not rely upon the free trade of private entrepreneurs but upon military alliances, special government-backed loans, government contracts, and other non-free-market forms of trade. This neo-mercantilist global policy must be backed up by a worldwide US military presence (The stick) and US government aid and arms sales (the carrot). Thus the US, which is at peace, still maintains a total force level of 2.1 million troops.

In the five years since Vietnam, the rulers of the American empire have discovered that the all-volunteer force (AVF) is inherently a peacetime, *defense-oriented* army. While perfectly adequate to *defend* the US, the AVF is not suited to quick mobilizations for foreign wars and has trouble maintaining the large troop levels necessary for a global empire. Even so, the AVF has proven remarkably effective at raising volunteers. The absence of a readily available pool of manpower and draft machinery is a serious thorn in the side of any would-be Caesar. Before Caesar could plunge into the fray there would have to be Congressional debate and money appropriated; the policy would have to be justified to the people.

This irksome volunteer military gives the government a basic choice: either give up its vast military commitments around the world and confine the armed services to *defense*, or junk the volunteer army and shore up the empire. Is there any doubt about what choice they will make?



The choice is complicated by economic and political considerations. There are, first of all, powerful economic interests which thrive on our neo-mercantilist role abroad. The weapons industry, government contractors, the aerospace industry, and many, many others exert powerful pressure in favor of the status quo. Giving up our global commitments means giving up mercantilism, demilitarizing our economy, and beginning a long readjustment toward a rational, free-market economy as investments once again flow to productive ventures.

There is also the politically troublesome fact that the government doesn't need *everyone* in the army (yet); it only needs a small portion of the youth population. Yet the very *selectivity* of the old Selective Service System was one of the most vicious and unpopular things about it: rich kids always managed to get out of the draft, college students wanted deferments, non-college youth resented the deferments, and so on. This is where *National Service*, as opposed to the bad old *draft*, comes in. National Service allows you to draft *everybody*, funneling those not needed by the military into make-work jobs. In one stroke you satisfy both militarists and the statist *liberal* who want to crank out die-stamped *good citizens*. It also neatly solves the youth unemployment problem, created by government minimum wage laws and other regulations, by rounding up all the little devils into work camps.

National Service is a statist dream that defies all categorization of left and right. It combines the worst of CETA, the Army, and the public schools into an American version of the Hitler Youth. Libertarians are the only people capable of understanding it and of consistently opposing it.

We are fast approaching a fundamental, historically crucial choice in this country. After the failures in Iran, Angola, and Vietnam, the Cold War system is out of equilibrium; it must strengthen itself or be dismantled. The choice is between the free market, a civilian economy, basic civil liberties, and a non-interventionist foreign policy *versus* a socialized economy of conscripted labor and military contracts, a government that registers, classifies and spies on its citizens, and a foreign policy of international militarism and mercantilism.

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