

No Draft!

Conscription is State Slavery

Fifth Estate Collective

1980

As the terrifying prospect of war asserts itself in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. is preparing to mobilize what all nation states need to fight armed conflicts—human cannon fodder. With President Carter's bellicose State of the Union speech, January 23, that precondition for war was set out—registration as the preliminary step to re-institution of the military draft—state slavery for those between 18 and 26-years-of-age. Our daily unmitigated hatred of the political state can only be intensified with this plan to further rob young people of their freedom and create unwilling messengers of death of them—robots for the generals, politicians and the oil companies.

As it stands now, Carter plans to scrap the hated local draft boards of the 1960s; Post Office branches would be used to accept the proposed registration of the tens of millions within the draft ages. This registration would then be used as the basis for the drafting and induction of soldiers if a military adventure necessitated a rapid increase in the Armed Forces.

Lying, in the best tradition of politicians, Carter said in his recent speech that this registration was not necessarily a prelude to a military draft and the current volunteer farces are "adequate for present defense needs." Besides the fact that the U.S. has never had a registration without a draft (and rarely a draft without a war), anyone with even a passing acquaintance with the existing volunteer army knows the falsity of Carter's statement. With the threat of induction gone and only the push of permanent unemployment present as an inducement for the poor to join the military, today's "Action Army," by all accounts has become a rag-tag, drug-infested, low-motivation, low-morale outfit.



Above: 1,000 demonstrators at an anti-war, anti-draft rally in front of the White House. Other demonstrations included 5,000 in Los Angeles at a Carter fund-raiser Feb. 8; 2,500 Feb. 2 at Boston's City Hall; 1,000 at Berkeley Feb. 11; 300 to 400 in Columbia, Mo., Feb. 1; 2,500 at the University of Arizona on Feb. 12 and endless smaller demonstrations and rallies. A March 22 national anti-draft rally is scheduled with actions planned for around the country. Photo / Phantasm Photography

The military reserves, as well as the regular Army, has fallen well below the numerical level desired by the imperialist generals and the quality and fighting resolve is continually questioned by those desiring a gung-ho army ready to fight anywhere at the master's command. We should be assured that it will be only a matter of time before Carter sees the need for the military inductions to begin again.

To those who see Carter's tough talk as only sabre rattling motivated by his re-election desires, we would do well to remember Napoleon's admonition that the only thing that cannot be done with bayonets is to sit on them. In other words, weapons are not possessed for any purpose other than to use them. The obscene slaughter we call modern warfare cannot be assembled without a mass army of conscripts willing to bloody themselves endlessly for the grand designs of the politicians (that is, except the so-called unacceptable alternative of nuclear holocaust with the participation of only a few "experts" on each side).

Our Humiliation; The State's Triumph

Registering for the draft becomes, much like voting, an assent to being ruled and used, but unlike the act of balloting, the repressive machinery of the state stands ready to spring against the first sign of uncooperativeness on the part of the individual who simply desires to be free of the political and military schemes of the government. Since most of us on the FE staff previously submitted to registration demanded on one's 18th birthday under the old Selective Service Act, we know personally that the humiliation of having to passively obey the command of the authority we despise is at the same time the political state's triumph.

The state also recognizes this abnegation and responds accordingly: you are transformed from a human into a serial number on a print-out sheet; a number that will be activated into the service of a hated government and social system and ordered to kill others no different from you who have been forced into similar servitude on the other side. All of your wishes are reduced to nothing while those of the state become unrefusable commands.

Fear of Mass Refusals

What Carter and the Government are banking on is that the affected men and women will view the order to register and their desire to refuse as an unequal contest—the state versus the isolated individual—and that the majority will simply take the path of least resistance swallow hard and trek down to the Post Office at their appointed hour.

However, the great fear which must lurk in Carter's mind is that both his draft schemes and military contingency plans will be defeated by a mass refusal to become part of his project of death. A 1979 study by the Congressional Budget Office predicted that if the draft is re-instated, as many as 100,000 draft-eligible youth will fail to register annually. During the Vietnam era over 570,000 draft resisters violated Selective Service laws and somewhere between 250,000 and one million draft-age males refused to register for the draft.

There have already been demonstrations on many campuses around the country and a poll reported in *Time* magazine shows 55% of draft age youth against conscription, but it will take a few months to see whether compliance or resistance will be the tenor of the period. Carter knows that any massive resistance would constitute an enormous political defeat for him and forestall any Pentagon war plans since no gang of rulers will carry out a war with a large section of the population in opposition to them.

We wholeheartedly expect both mass and individual refusals of registration, as well as demonstrations at Post Offices when the time to register comes, other disruptions and the most flagrant violations of the procedures—all in a manner we cannot even possibly foresee in advance, but all of which we look forward to with great relish. One problem is that the popular resistance to the registration plan has brought the official left out like flies on shit, desperate for a "winning" issue, after a decade of defeats and isolation. This will force those uninterested in the

recruitment drives of these parasites to rely upon their own inventiveness all the more if they desire not to have their forms of protest constrained by the imaginelessness of the professional politicians of dissent.

The Latest Excess of Capital

It is very possible to be critical of anti-draft activity or agitation as only that much more in the parade of mindless militancy which refuses ever to grasp the totality and prefers to stagger forward, sheaf of leaflets in hand, immediately upon the appearance of the latest excess of capital. And with so many liberal, leftist and feminist groups already in opposition to the draft (to say nothing of opportunist politicians like Kennedy, Brown, and even Gerry “Oatmeal Man” Ford coming out against registration), it certainly does look like a movement destined from the start for recuperation and not real contestation.

Still, the real fundamental abuse of human freedom which the draft is, and what a triumph its subversion would be, should not be lost on those of us who desire a more thoroughgoing critique of the state and modern society. The draft has facets unique to most single issue struggles that link it directly to a larger understanding that slavery to the state, the sacrifices it demands and what the state protects is the totality of the modern epoch.

We can only hope that what has begun as an opposition to a single aspect of this ghastly society will soon come to consume its whole. But even if it doesn't, the sight of mass resistance to the arrogant plans of the ghouls who run this show will certainly warm us through the remainder of this cold winter.

Sidebar

“When you left your home, you were in your mother's care. Now you're in my care. From now on, every time you move, breathe, piss or blow your nose, it will be what I tell you to do. From now on you will do as you're told, and that is the only thing you will do. Is that clear?”

—from a tape of a Marine training

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