

Draft Foes Growing

A million unregistered?

Fifth Estate Collective

1980



Demonstrators on the steps of the "Defense" Dept. during the March 22, 1980 Washington DC rally against the draft and war.

When bullet-headed Selective Service Director Bernard D. Rostker looked sternly into the TV cameras last July and predicted that all but 2% of the nation's 19- and 20-year-old men would comply with the scheduled draft registration his self-confidence was chilling. It was easy to believe that a generation of youth untouched by the protests of the '60's and '70's and raised on the Fonz and skateboards would march dutifully off to their local Post Office to become willing parts of the state military machine.

But, oooh, how sweet! By all calculations somewhere between 800,000 and a million men refused to submit and even the government has admitted that at least 20% of those in the required age group refused to subject themselves to the government war orders. (1) Figures were so high in certain areas that they can only be seen as constituting mass resistance: In Peoria, Illi-

nois (mid-America personified) a *Boston Globe* survey found 47% refused to register with many other cities showing high nonregistration rates such as Baltimore with 31%, Kansas City with 27%, and Boston itself with a 30% refusal rate. The *Fifth Estate* could not obtain figures for the Detroit area.

In another survey, the Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) found registration resistance to be as high as 44% in Atlanta and 31% in Seattle. All of the figures cited were based on 1970 census figures which have been charged with severely undercounting urban populations, particularly minorities, so the percentages could even be higher. Plus the large number of resident and undocumented aliens were not counted in either the government figures or the two surveys, and one can only surmise that turnout was low, particularly in the latter category.

During the required sign-up period hundreds of anti-draft rallies, demonstrations and leafletings occurred at the Post Office registration sites and were the largest anti-war/anti-military actions the country has witnessed since the Vietnam era. In many cities potential registrants turned away after discussions with demonstrators or affixed anti-draft stickers supplied by the protesters to their registration forms. Isolated incidents of attacks on Post Offices occurred, and in several cities postal workers objected to their buildings being used for the registration.

In Detroit, a picket line of 200, which had the character of an anti-war movement reunion, paraded in front of the Main Post Office. Still, many young people participated and only a handful of registrants passed through the

lines to sign up. One, when asked by a local TV crew if he was “ready, able and willing to serve his country,” replied sarcastically, “I’m ready and able, but I’m sure not willing.”

The government is now faced with up to a million outlaws and what to do with them. Annually, the federal government conducts about 40,000 prosecutions so such an increased load seems like an improbable undertaking, but tough-talking Selective Service head Rostker has warned, “The kid who throws down the gauntlet to the government will be prosecuted.” The government has also let leak that prosecutions may begin this December, but a draft lawyer the Fifth Estate spoke to said this is most likely an attempt to frighten those unregistered into doing so before the next sign-up period in January.

As it stands now, it does not seem as though resisters have much to worry about in the short run. The enforcement end of the enabling legislation did not take into account such large numbers of resisters, hence there is an inadequate amount of money for enforcement. Also, the spectre of the government tracking down, prosecuting and imprisoning such an immense number of young people would create a political movement of opposition that no politician would be willing to deal with.

As it is, Carter is trying to back-burner the whole affair until after the election, realizing what an unpopular issue the draft is. Carter was booed at his own convention when he reminded the delegates that he had resumed draft registration to support our “military preparedness.”

Also, constitutional experts and lawyers question whether resisters could be successfully prosecuted in light of the ruling by a 3-judge panel in Philadelphia which held the male-only draft violated sex discrimination provisions of the U.S. Constitution. But legal considerations aside, those who took part in this massive movement of resistance can look with pride upon the fact that they chose an act of freedom over one of servitude to the state. For those of us who were not faced directly with that choice, we can only offer you our support in whatever manner is necessitated by the government reaction to your decision. This means that no one of you will have to stand alone whether you need something as simple as legal advice or as complicated as sudden transportation and sanctuary. Hopefully, your resistance will be part of what cripples the U.S. drive to war and hopefully it will be just the opening salvo in the defeat of militarism.

This newspaper can be contacted by mail or phone for any assistance requests; those desiring draft information locally can contact the National Lawyers Guild at their Draft Counseling Clinic held Tuesday and Thursday evening from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at 1035 St. Antoine or by calling their office at 963-0843; nationally, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO), 2208 South St., Philadelphia PA 19146 publishes draft information and “war objector” statements; the Anarchist-Communist Federation states it will “aid and abet anyone engaging in anti-draft struggles or GI-resistance within the military.” They can be contacted at POB 2, Station O, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4B 2B0 for a list of chapters in Canada and the U.S.

Materials on the draft of interest that have arrived recently at the Fifth Estate include two leaflets from the U.C.C. (Union of Concerned Commies), Box 1200 2000 Center St., Berkeley CA 94704; one is “We’ve Already Been Drafted” and the other “Crisis and Its Uses;” a new comic discussing the draft and its use, “Resistance Comix,” is available from Paul Janosik, c/o New Indicator, B-023, U of C, San Diego, La Jolla CA 92093.

FUCK THE DRAFT!

Note

(1) As always when dealing with the government, Mr. Dooley’s old adage comes into play: “Figures don’t lie, but liars can figure.” According to the September 4, 1980 New York Times, “The Selective Service System expects to announce that more than 80% of the young men subject to draft registration last July signed up, Carter Administration officials indicated.” The article says that the government was prepared to state that this figure was a “victory” since it represented a higher sign-up figure than that of the Vietnam era. However, between the first announcement of the 80% figure and SSS Director Rostker’s press conference several days later, the number of registrants magically turned into 92% compliance which even still represents 160,000 refusers.



Fifth Estate Collective
Draft Foes Growing
A million unregistered?
1980

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/303-october-20-1980/draft-foes-growing>
Fifth Estate #303, October 20, 1980

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net