

Million Refuse Registration

Draft Law at Standstill

Fifth Estate Collective

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Faced with upwards of a million men who have refused to register for the draft, President Reagan announced on December 10, a halt to prosecutions scheduled in the cases of 161 resisters. This means that currently there are no legal sanctions for failing to comply with the Selective Service Act provisions and hopefully it will impel hundreds of thousands of additional young men to refuse to have any part of the U.S. war machine.

The Reagan decision comes in the face of the massive refusal of compliance with the Selective Service System (SSS)—estimated even by the government to be 25% of those required and even higher by anti-draft activists. The 161 cases that were scheduled for prosecution were almost all men who had made their protests public with the government admitting that it has very little way of identifying who the huge bulk of remaining uncooperators are.

The suspension of prosecutions by the Reagan administration came right at a point when the anti-draft movement believed they were about to commence and after a summer of government attempts to intimidate the unregistered into compliance. However, the scheduled indictment of a St. Olaf college student, Scott Asseng, 20, by a Minneapolis grand jury brought about the direct intervention of top White House officials Edwin Meese and Martin Anderson to block the indictment. The reason given was that the President wanted to review the report of the Military Manpower Task Force which will make its recommendations in January regarding re-instatement of the draft.

The National Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) hailed the decision at a press conference stating that opposition to conscription had played a major role in the temporary suspension, but warned that prosecutions would very likely be resumed in a coordinated manner once the President receives the task force report. According to sources close to the presidential commission, the paper will recommend that the draft not be reinstated, but that the registration process be continued. It is believed that this will be the signal for the resumption of prosecution of the public protesters which the government is banking on to intimidate others into signing up as required.

However, at this point, the only reason for registering is the active desire to be part of the military mechanism, since even prior to the suspension, it became increasingly clear that the government has absolutely no way of forcing large numbers of men to comply if they choose not to. The one million non-registrants claimed as the actual number by the anti-draft movement represents double the figure estimated to have avoided the draft during the entire Vietnam war era between 1963 and 1975. Of that number, only 209,517 were identified as evaders, and fewer than one per cent of those ever went to prison.

Even simple arithmetic shows that it is impossible to imprison one million resisters in the 47,000 bed Federal penal system or to even begin to prosecute such a large number of outlaws. Instead, the government is banking on a large scale campaign of intimidation aimed at graduating high school seniors and their parents to bring about compliance.

One such ploy last summer demonstrated the government's level of desperation at the growing resistance to its draft laws. The SSS mailed 1.2 million postcards to draft-age men in late summer reminding them of their legal

obligation to sign up for conscription. At first the cards caused concern among nonregistrants who thought they had been discovered, but one activist advised, "If you're a non-registrant who received a postcard, it doesn't mean you have been discovered. The postcards were sent to a random mailing list obtained from a commercial mailing firm for one-time use only."

The SSS is still attempting to maintain the fiction that the registration has nothing to do with preparation for war or that the draft itself is about to be re-instituted, but the facts belie their claim. The Selective Service staff has recently been expanded by a third and has moved into a new five-story headquarters in Washington which features upgraded computer facilities and a new classification system.

President Reagan, who campaigned on an anti-draft platform, has recently nominated Major General Thomas Turnage as SSS Director and he is on record as favoring the drafting of young men for a six month tour of "duty." The SSS itself has already been involved in mock induction procedures, preparing for the time when the orders come down. Reagan knows that his military build-up, the largest since World War II, cannot be managed without an increase in military manpower not currently available through the volunteer army, so it will only be a matter of time before induction is re-instated.

The reasons for refusing to register vary among the young men ranging from moral to religious to political or a combination according to a sample of the public statements which recently appeared in *Resistance News*, 944 Market St., Rm. 705, San Francisco CA 94102. Joshua Abrams of New Haven, Conn. said, "... My main objections (to the draft) are moral in nature...I don't see registration as an isolated issue, but as part of an unabidably greater phenomenon of disrespect for human freedom and life."

Michael Chastain of Richmond, Calif. wrote, "I urge all Americans who love liberty to resist the most tyrannical power a government can use, the power to force free citizens to submit to the misery of and bloodshed of war. I urge all Americans who love peace to resist this step toward the next Vietnam-style war."

Paul Jolly of Bronxville, New York, stated, "this country; as I'm sure you know is preparing itself for war. Draft registration is a gesture of compliance with the military ethos. It is an indication of availability. I have decided not to register simply because I am not available for military 'service.'"

These are just a sample of the men who are resisting publicly and also the ones who appear to be in jeopardy of federal prosecution. Legal defense of all men who have received letters from the SSS threatening them with prosecution for non-registration is being coordinated by the Selective Service Law Panel, 1911 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90057; they can suggest anti-draft lawyers in your communities. If there is no draft counselor in your region, information may be obtained from *Draft Counseling*, Recon Publications, Box 14602, Philadelphia PA 19134. In the Detroit area, counseling is available from the National Lawyers Guild at 9630843 or at Wayne State University by calling 577-3451 or 833-8573.

Ultimately, the best defense against victimization by the government is for young draft resisters to mobilize their friends and families around their actions and to see that their community has a firm understanding of the motivations behind their resistance if a confrontation does occur. The best offense against the government's drive toward war is to extend the resistance movement even further; to encourage as much active refusal and support of those refusals as possible.

FUCK THE ARMY! FUCK THE DRAFT!

Registration Continued By Reagan

FLASH! Just as we were going to press Jan. 8, President Reagan ordered the continuation of draft registration and offered a "grace period" for signing up of the more than one million men who have failed to comply with the law.

Although this is a complete reversal of his campaign promises (lies), the president said he was accepting the recommendations of his cabinet advisers who said the move was necessitated as a response to the situation in Poland. The president's manpower commission has apparently still not given its recommendations on the draft.

Although it is unclear what is meant by the “grace period,” the Justice Department said that it was in the process of “working out” a 30 to 60 day period in which refusers could register without penalty. However, as it currently stands, the suspension of prosecutions remains in effect and no penalty exists for refusing to register.

Protests Set If Draft Arrests Occur

TDA—The Day After—is a contingency plan to mobilize nation-wide protest demonstrations the day following the announcement of the indictment of any draft resister. Devised by the National Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) and other peace groups, public protests will be held at designated locations in each city. In Detroit, people will assemble at the Federal Court Building on Fort Street at 4:00 pm; call 833-8573 for more info.

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