

Recruitment

Military pushes poverty draft

Fifth Estate Collective

Prosecution of some fifty-five known resisters of draft registration was to begin in June. However, in an effort to avoid student protests and demonstrations, the government has decided to postpone prosecution until later in the summer. Also, according to an article in the *Detroit Free Press* (5/20/82), a recent Defense Department document has revealed that the administration, obviously intimidated by the anti-nuclear war movement, fears that litigation against these resisters will further stimulate that movement. When questioned about this document, the White House press secretary responded that the government's policy is still registration, not prosecution.

The registration prosecutions, though delayed, will eventually take place. Four batches of warning letters have already been sent to suspected offenders over the past year. The government hopes that the prosecution of a select number of these young men will scare the other 500,000 or more non-registrants into compliance. Nationwide public protests are scheduled to occur on the first-working day following the first prosecution of a registration resister. The Detroit demonstration will take place in front of the Federal Court Building on Fort Street at 4:00 (for more information, call C.A.R.D., at 833-8573, or the Fifth Estate, afternoons, at 831-6800). Protests against the training of draft board members, which began April 1st and will continue through August, have already been held in several parts of the country.

According to the May 1982 Objector, Selective Service System Director Major General Thomas Turnage reported on March 25 that the SSS will soon begin using Social Security numbers to identify resisters. The numbers will be matched with the numbers reported on registration cards in order to discover those names that do not appear in the registration files. SSS will then use IRS lists to find the addresses of the non-registrants. First-class reminder letters will be sent, and the names of those who still refuse to comply will then be turned over to the Justice Department for additional investigation and contingent prosecution. Another harassment bill has recently been introduced by Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-NY). The bill, which is not likely to pass, would deprive non-registrants of any federal assistance they may receive, and would then deny them employment by the federal government or federally funded agencies.

The SSS has planned a massive publicity campaign for 1982 aimed at "encouraging" draft-age men to comply with registration. The campaign will include TV and radio advertising, letters, and copy-ready registration advertisements to be sent to high school administrators. SSS speakers will also be on hand for visits to high schools to discuss registration with students.

It is very difficult these days to come up with reliable figures for non-registration. During the past year and a half, the numbers have jumped back and forth between 1,000,000 and 500,000. SSS of course, would have us believe that American youths are quietly and steadily complying with the law, and that since the March deadline there has been a marked increase in registration. Director Turnage recently reported that registration is now up to 93.6% and that the number of resisters now stands at 535,000. A quick review of such "official" reports publicized intermittently over the past few years make all too obvious the absurdity of "legitimate" government statistics and "authoritative" speculation.

We would prefer to believe what we see before our own eyes and what we hear first-hand. We know countless men who have not and will not register. Local draft counselors who have direct contact with draft-age men tell us that non-registration is incredibly high, especially among urban black youth; they are not necessarily resisting registration, they're ignoring it. They do not even consider it a real threat, and fewer and fewer young men feel the need to seek the help of draft counselors in making their decision to resist. It is certainly possible that the "official" percentages are being manipulated and that the true figures could prove embarrassing to the SSS and actually encourage additional offenders. It is also important to remember that many who registered unthinkingly have since become aware of the implications of registration and regret their decision. Many now say that they would never go along with a draft. Whatever it is, the number of non-registrants is high, and even that number does not present a true or total picture of the anti-war sentiment among American youth.

New Government Strategy: the "Poverty Draft"

It has become apparent in the past few months that the administration and its military shadow have shifted strategies in their efforts to beef-up the armed forces; sensing the general antagonism toward registration, a hard and heavy emphasis has been placed on recruitment. The effects of this push are already clear; the *New York Times* (5/23/82) stated, "This may be the best recruiting year for the military since the draft ended in 1973, according to Pentagon figures."

Such tactics fit in neatly with Reaganomics and are clearly targeted at exploiting those who have been forced into financially precarious positions. Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), quoted in an article in the *U.S. News and World Report* (5/17/82) entitled "All Volunteer Force Gets New Lease on Life," explains the situation very simply: "Supply-side economics are working. It is supplying the military with volunteers." The educational and employment options of the poor and working classes have been systematically depleted while at the same time the military is allowed to fraudulently present itself as the only means of learning a viable new skill and is financially capable of offering more and more educational benefits. Just as the Reagan administration has succeeded in eliminating or drastically reducing student loan and grant programs, the military has implemented a massive and ostentatious recruitment campaign openly directed at college-bound high school seniors.

Both college-bound and employment-conscious young men and women are a prime target. The decision not to require women to register for the draft, for instance, ultimately does little to divert today's military planners from their objectives because women are being recruited in record numbers. On the surface, at least, the military has cleverly altered its attitude toward women. According to an article in the newsletter of the Central Committee of Conscientious Objectors, as early as 1977 the military effected a number of policy changes in order to lure women to pursue military careers. ROTC programs in high schools have for some time now included women, military academies greet them with open arms, and women can now receive flight training and training in other areas which previously excluded them. Women are no longer discharged for pregnancy; on the contrary, they are even equipped with maternity uniforms! All of these and other changes have been made in an attempt to obscure from public view the realities of a system which is inherently sexist and inhuman, a system which has been and continues to be very successful at turning women and men into submissive machines.

Recruiters, experts at masking this simple truth, have been making an increasing number of visits to high schools, and thus far they have been greeted with little or no opposition as their presence is openly sanctioned and encouraged by most school administrators. Locally, it is obvious that they have already zeroed in on working class neighborhoods clearly devastated by unemployment. Students' lockers are often decorated with slick army bumper stickers, while registration reminder posters hang outside the principal's office and free colorful brochures on all areas of the military sit neatly on the bookshelves in school libraries.

Many English classes use the popular *Scholastic Scope* magazine which attempts to encourage students to read by presenting material with youth appeal in clear and simple language. Last year, it generally contained only two or three advertisements, all for youth-oriented products like skin creams, shampoos, and Papermate pens. But recent issues have considerably more advertising space and, aside from ads for video games, the majority of this new space is devoted to full page ads for the Navy ("It's not just a job, it's an adventure"), the Army ("Be all you can

be”), the Air Force (“Aim high. A great way of life”), the National Guard (“Great benefits. Now and for your future”), and the Marines (“Maybe you can be one of us. The few. The proud. The Marines”). Most every ad comes complete with toll free information telephone numbers and postage-paid business reply cards; the card for the Air Force even has a space for your social security number. The new ads overtly address themselves to the “college-bound” clearly delineating the educational benefits now being offered by the Army College Fund and the ROTC Scholarship Program. In a typical Army ad, a clean-cut, uniformed earnest-looking type stares boldly out at you, and the text reads:

“A lot of people who start college right after high school find they’re not ready for it. That’s a good reason to think about serving two years in the Army first. In the Army, you mature fast. You’re given responsibility. And you begin to appreciate the value of an education. You also get generous financial benefits. In the Army, every dollar you save for college is matched two-for-one by the government in a special program. Then, if you qualify, the Army adds as much as \$8,000 more to that...”

The advertising propaganda campaign is only one aspect of this major push by the military to strengthen its position and expand its influence among working class youth. On April 29–30 the Defense Department sponsored a convention-type forum where it wined and dined some 200 Detroit-area high school counselors and administrators and held sessions on the Army, Navy and Air Force. The purpose of such a forum is patently obvious: what better way to get cannon fodder than to transform the schools themselves into the recruitment apparatus.

Confronting the Recruiters

Even though opposition to registration is strong, this new tactic is potentially very dangerous primarily because within the sphere of the campaign’s focus, there is nothing at all comparable to question the legitimacy of its outrageous claims and ridiculous promises. While the military has open access to schools, opposition voices lack the “acceptable credentials.” The vulnerable potential recruits are never made aware of the fact that once caught by the military, they just may not qualify for the “special programs,” that while the military offers training in a myriad of skills, soldiers don’t have the freedom to choose the training they want. A young marine quoted recently in the April 1982 *Mother Jones* explains what happens: “Recruiters tell you all kinds of shit, like how they’re gonna make you a computer programmer. Then you sign up and you find out they can put you wherever they want and there’s nothing you can do about it.” It should be common knowledge that of the many jobs the military trains its people to do, only nine per cent of those jobs are transferable to civilian society. Countless young men and women are victims of the military’s recruitment fraud, and to evidence this, recent statistics show that 114,900 soldiers per year go AWOL (which is 17% of all military personnel) and that 10% of last year’s recruits received a less than honorable discharge.

It is crucial that as individuals we recognize that the tentacles of this military monster are everywhere around us, and that we begin to counter its propaganda and expose its motives at every opportunity. Passive resistance to registration and the draft, though necessary and admirable, are obviously not enough. We must confront the recruiters, defend and support insubordination and defiance within the ranks of the armed forces, and actively challenge the military’s right to exist.

FUCK THE DRAFT!

FUCK RECRUITMENT!

SMASH THE WAR MACHINE!

(Much of the above information came from the following publications: *Resistance News*, National Resistance Committee, P.O. Box 42488, San Francisco CA 94142; and *The Objector*, CCCO, 2208 South Street, Philadelphia PA 19146.)



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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/309-june-19-1982/recruitment>
Fifth Estate #309, June 19, 1982

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