

Hell No! We Won't Go

New threat of draft calls for new resistance

Doug Graves

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Over the course of a decade, almost ten million Americans served the US military in the Vietnam War, and one quarter of those were draftees. Almost 60,000 Americans died, and almost 60% of those were under the age of 21. In terms of sheer numbers, today's all-volunteer army is much leaner. And many young people who signed up out of economic necessity aren't that stoked about Bush's War Without End.

Last year, awaiting his marching orders, a US Marine wrote to an online antiwar forum, "We are very scared that this will be like Vietnam all over again. We are afraid that we will come home and be called baby killers. We want the people to know that we did not ask for this job."

By the beginning of 2004, Congressmen had introduced legislation to bring back the draft by 2005. Today, the mainstream media abounds with stories of the US military being stretched thin and not having enough personnel or equipment to function.

As military planners push American hegemony across the planet, they need cannon fodder. While proclaiming that the proliferation of private mercenaries will prevent conscription, the Pentagon is quietly reactivating Draft Boards across the country. Young men are reading their Selective Service literature and asking questions that will help them refuse.

The proposed, revised draft calls for all Americans between the ages of 18 and 26 to enlist in the military. Women and college students are not exempt; neither are conscientious objectors, who would be placed in non-combative service.

In addition, the "Smart Border Declaration" of 2001 between the US and Canada would monitor draft-dodgers from the US, implementing a "pre-clearance agreement" of people attempting to enter the country.

There is also talk of a "special skills" draft to conscript folks who can speak Arabic or can run complex computer systems and what not. Either way, with the war in Iraq intensifying, the war on terror expanding, and disillusioned GI's abandoning the military, the war machine is going to need more killers and cannon fodder. Without a major change in American foreign policy, a draft is probably unavoidable.

With the mainstream peace movement clinging to the slogan that we should support "our" troops by bringing them home, we need to educate all men and women about why they should never become troops in the first place. We need to invigorate counter-recruiting strategies and particularly reach out to teenagers.

Webmaster at "draftresistance.org," Scott A. Kohlhaas provides plenty of salient advice about stopping the draft at the root by refusing registration.

He begins, "The most important reason why you should not register for the draft is because you own your body. You own your life. With the draft, the government says that they own your life and they will do whatever they want with your body for as long as they want when they decide the time is right. So don't register!"

He shows how refusing registration is a political strategy and further debunks the scare tactics used by Selective Service. For starters, he explains the power of non-compliance. Since Jimmy Carter reinstated registration for a possible war in Afghanistan, three million people have refused to register. Of those, only 13 have been prosecuted.

Put plainly: while a new draft is likely, massive noncooperation is even more likely. Kohlhaas explains, “Millions more are in violation of the law for moving and not re-registering. This law has the highest rate of non-compliance since the prohibition of alcohol in the 1920s.”

If the government is unable or unwilling to go after non-registrants today, how will they ever stop an even more widespread refusal of the actual draft?

While Selective Service boasts, “It’s Quick” and “It’s Easy,” refusal is even easier. Kohlhaas puts it clearly, “Basically, we’re asking you to do nothing. Do not lift a finger to help the Selective Service System.” Like not voting, this once revolutionary act any lazy ass can pull off with panache.

Kohlhaas convincingly attacks the most compelling myth about registration: “Many young men register in the belief that it is their only way to get their student aid for college, but that is a fallacy. The Fund for Education and Training (FEAT) will give you money for college if you refuse to register. So don’t register! FEAT address: 1830 Connecticut Avenue NW Washington DC 20009-5732, phone (202) 483-2220, fax: (202) 4831246.”

People argue that we should look forward to the draft because it will bring greater resistance to war, just as some say that Bush should win the election to quicken the revolution. But conscription is a fundamental violation of individual autonomy, an act of political domination against innocent youth, and a general ethical humiliation of human worth. Opposing it is essential.

Young? Worried about war? These contacts might help:

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, (510) 465-1667, (215) 563-8787

GI Rights Hotline (800) 394-9544

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