

[Military Draft]



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Draft*

THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

September 15, 1964

To: Senator Hubert H. Humphrey

From: Adlai E. Stevenson *AS*

Re: The Draft

Senator Goldwater has said that the Republicans would do away with the draft.

In the 1956 Presidential campaign, I suggested that with the post-war development of new weapons and military techniques the United States would be better served by the development of a skilled, professional, career army than by the draft which was inefficient, expensive and unfair in its application. This same proposal was repeated several times during the campaign, together with the supporting reasoning.

The proposal was attacked by the Republicans as "irresponsible". Senator Goldwater said: "If I were

Adlai Stevenson

Adlai Stevenson, I'd take the platform and tear it up." Two days later, September 20th, President Eisenhower supported the draft as follows:

"We cannot prove wise and strong by hinting that our military draft might soon be suspended, even though every family naturally hopes for the day when it might be possible. This, I state categorically, cannot be done under world conditions today."

I don't have Vice President Nixon's criticisms but they were, as usual, in his more extreme idiom.

The Republicans paid scant if any attention to the fact that I was not proposing to repeal the draft but to replace it with something better.

Now Goldwater has proposed the same thing, I gather, eight years after my proposal and several months after President Johnson had ordered a feasibility study of the whole idea.

My argument for replacing conscription with a career army of volunteers is set forth in a speech delivered at Youngstown, Ohio, October 18, 1956, published at page 59 in a book entitled "The New America,"

published

published by Harper's. An excerpt from that speech follows:

"Many military thinkers believe that the armies of the future, a future now upon us, will employ mobile, technically trained and highly professional units, equipped with tactical atomic weapons. Already it has become apparent that our most urgent need is to encourage trained men to re-enlist rather than to multiply the number of partly trained men as we are currently doing.

Meeting the increasingly urgent need for experienced and professional military personnel may well mean that we will need and want in the foreseeable future to turn to a method other than the draft for procuring such personnel.

This suggestion has been taken by some -- and deliberately misconstrued by others -- as a proposal for weakening our armed forces. It is exactly the opposite. It is a proposal for strengthening our armed forces.

The point is simply that we already need and will need more and more a type of military personnel -- experienced and professional -- which our present draft system does not give us. The draft means a tremendous turnover in our military personnel, and a resultant high proportion of inexperienced personnel. There is ample evidence that this inexperienced personnel is not meeting today's needs.

The Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel for the Army, Major General Donald P. Booth, said this to a Congressional committee last May 31:

'The use

'The use of the Selective Service, with its short period of duty, causes a heavy turnover of personnel throughout the Army to the detriment of efficiency, unit spirit, economy, and battle worthiness ... the two-year system is not conducive to economy nor stability.'

A total of some 750,000 men will leave our armed forces this year. Simply to give basic training -- nothing more -- to their replacements will cost the American taxpayer \$2.5 billion.

Air Force Chief of Staff, General Nathan F. Twining, testifying before a Congressional committee, condemned this needless personnel turnover in blunt terms -- as to both its cost and its damage to our military effectiveness.

'If this trend continues,' said General Twining, 'there would be more than a 100 per cent turnover in the Air Force every five years. No industry could absorb this rate of personnel turnover. Nor can the Air Force. This rate of turnover would lead directly to an alarming decline in operational effectiveness.'

It was such facts that persuaded Senator Mike Mansfield in March, 1955, to conclude:

'An armed service of professionals cannot be built by conscription. As in any profession, there must be a certain amount of incentive. The current situation in the branches of the service gives very little incentive to a young man to make a career out of the Army, Navy, Marines or Air Force.'

It was

It was such testimony that persuaded the Democratic Congress in 1955 to pass a career incentive act which resulted in base pay increases of from 7 to 17 per cent for enlisted men. It helped, but it was only a first step.

Every young man who has served in our armed forces knows the incredible waste of our present system of forced but short-term service. He knows the money that could be saved, the new efficiency that could result from a volunteer system which calls on young men not to endure two years of service because they have to, but to choose it -- and for a longer period -- because it offers advantages that seem to them appealing.

There seems to me every reason for searching out ways of making military service attractive enough that sufficient numbers of young men will choose such service voluntarily and will then remain in the services for longer periods.

By cutting down on turnover we can reduce the present enormous cost of training replacement after replacement. The money that is saved by this reduction in training costs can be used to pay our soldiers, sailors and airmen better salaries, to provide them with improved working conditions and perhaps to offer special bonus inducements for longer service. In this way we can develop a more effective defense, with higher morale, and I believe no higher cost.

Where there are needs for particularly highly trained men, as for example in radar, electronics and other specialties, I think we should consider offering university scholarships which will provide

specialized

specialized training, in conjunction with a liberal education, to applicants, otherwise qualified, who will agree to spend a specific period in the armed forces.

No one could feel more strongly than I do the imperative necessity of keeping our armed forces at full strength. And I include the necessity of meeting our obligations on this score under the NATO agreements.

What I have proposed, I repeat, is a consideration -- from the standpoint of military effectiveness, and from no other standpoint -- of what is the best way of obtaining the military personnel we need.

I do add -- and I think I speak for every person in America -- that we will count it a better day when we find that these military needs can best be met by a system which does not mean the disruption of the lives of an entire generation of young men; which lets them plan their education, and get started more quickly along life's ordained course.

This is, I submit, a matter that should be seriously considered by the American people. The Republican candidates insist that it should not even be discussed, that this isn't the people's business, and that with a military man in the White House things like this can best be left up to him.

Well, I say just this: What is involved here is the security, perhaps the life or death, of this nation. What is involved here is the use that should be made of two years of our sons' lives. What is involved here is whether there should be new ways of more effectively meeting new problems. And I say that these are decisions that must be made not by one man -- not by one general -- not even by one man as president -- but by the American people."



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