

Draft Bill Held Misunderstood

'Selective Service' to Protect America Rather Than 'Compulsory Conscription' Is Called Its Objective

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Widespread misunderstanding of the Burke-Wadsworth conscription bill prevails. Many people think registration means immediate call to military service. Many who are most alarmed about a fifth column in case of war do not realize that enactment of this bill is the best way to deal with such subversive activities.

Let us simplify the spirit, terms and purposes of the bill. We can do so by using the cover page of the report of the hearing before the Senate Military Affairs Committee. The title of it is "Compulsory Military Training and Service."

Compulsory is not a pleasant word to many of us. It denotes conscription, which is a horrid word with a totalitarian sound. Conscription grants the Government the power to draft any man into the Army, and under this bill to draft him in time of peace. There is no denying this fact. It will remain established, if the bill is passed, until the bill is repealed.

The subtitle on the cover page calls it "A Bill to Protect the Integrity and Institutions of the United States Through a System of Selective Compulsory Military Service." Reports of the bill's progress are increasingly given to leave out the word "selective" before the word "compulsory."

But, first consider "protect the integrity and institutions of the United States." Conscription is accepted too exclusively as limited to military preparedness against armed attack from without. How will it protect us from dangerous forces working from within?

Candidates Are Investigated

Turn to the requisite qualifications for a private in our Regular Army or a seaman in our Regular Navy today. Passing the educational and physical test is preliminary to further examination. If the candidate is in easy reach of a recruiting station, say in a city, an experienced non-com goes to his home and looks up his record and the company he keeps.

This check-up is made by mail through the local postmaster or other reliable sources, if he lives at a distance—on a farm or in a village.

No one touched with subversive teachings is wanted.

Registration in peace supplies initial information which will not have to be obtained in haste if war comes. Any man with subversive tendencies can be dealt with immediately. He will have to prove that his claim to be a conscientious objector is not an excuse for a slacker. If it should appear, when his case is studied by the draft experts, that he has just got off on the wrong foot and likely will make a good soldier, on the way to become a good citizen, if rightly handled, he will be received in the draft army.

Association May Well Cure His Grouch

He will not find he is in a group who shared his warped views. Care is always taken to avoid that error. He will be in the ranks between two normal, right-minded American youths. Association likely will cure him of his grouch just as it did a host of similar examples in the World War draft.

He will live a healthy, disciplined life in place of a malcontent, not to say disorderly life. Serving under the flag will insure depths of feeling for it which he could never get by watching it pass in a parade. We cannot stress too much the "selective" before the "compulsory" since "selective" is being so frequently omitted; or too much that being registered does not mean you will be called out—an impression common among many people. If all men from 21 to 31, who would be registered, under the terms of the bill as it came from the Senate committee, should be called out we should have 15 to 20 times the 400,000 or 500,000 which it is proposed to draft for the first year.

By registration we shall know what each man is best fitted to do, whether mechanic or clerk, his present employment and general qualifications. This is only the extension for war needs of the personnel system of any corporation or any employment bureau, seeking to place unemployed or high school or college graduates. Employers do not choose on sight or by lot, but on records. The Army would have records and choose by lot.

Registration Might Help F. B. I.

In the World War—when we started from scratch—months passed, not only at home, but in the A. E. F., before we got satisfactory allocation of personnel. It was quite human that men wanted to do what they were accustomed to doing and best fitted to do. Under registration in peace we shall be through with all this groundwork when war comes. It will not happen as it did in France in 1917-18 when the service of supply, needing 100 more automobile mechanics, had to hunt for them.

It is past understanding to one with experience of war and in the light of what happened in Europe, how any one who favors universal fingerprinting can object to selective service registration to meet attack from without. This registration might tip off the sleuths of our F. B. I. about potential fifth columnists for the attack from within.

Some opponents of selective service who have a weakness for analogies, without looking too closely into premises, point out that the totalitarian dictators conscript all the way from grandchildren to grandparents. They see conscription as the very mother of dictatorships. Not to mention how Lenin paved the way for Stalin in Russia. It was by raising volunteer gangs, black shirt and storm troops that Premier Mussolini became master of Italy, and Chancellor Hitler of Germany. Dictators most often rise as the result of national unrest and defeat. In war or peace they come when a people are in the mood to vest all power, as indispensable, in one man.

If the British had started conscription in ample time before the war they would be in a better position to defend their homeland and their possessions overseas. Australia hesitated long, but now, with her lifeline threatened by Japan's incursion into East Indian waters and the Italian attempt to control the Gulf of Aden, she is about to adopt a full measure of conscription.

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