

A new draft represents the clearest and most consistent application of several principles which are the root causes of the lack of liberty in America today.

In moral terms, the power and use of power by government to compel individuals to serve two years in the armed forces is clearly slavery. Of a limited term variety to be sure, but slavery none the less. Some argue that this is a "necessary evil" and others that it is a moral good - a kind of dues - but none can deny that it is compulsive, forceful and anti-voluntary. There are three moral questions involved in the draft issue; the answers to which sum up the essential differences between libertarianism and statist collectivism.

The first is that of slavery. Should a society ever compel an individual to serve any master except himself or pursue any goals but his own? If one answers in the positive, then the path lies open to base one's actions not on morality but on pragmatic necessity. The second issue is that of sacrifice. Objective philosophy teaches us that sacrifice is anti-life, and that in a free society no rational man truly sacrifices but rather receives a gain in value from all actions he makes in life. Only physical coercion can force man to sacrifice and, to that degree that one is forced to sacrifice, then one is forced to pursue an anti-life existence. Hence the draft not only violates the lives of its victims; it also attacks the central theme of all human life, free choice and non-sacrifice. The third issue is the question of society vs. the individual. Fundamentally, one must decide which is more important . . . the goals of the individual or the goals of the majority in society. For thousands of years, thinkers and leaders of the world have held that for the good of the group, the tribe, the society, or the state individual rights must be sacrificed. (Once this is accepted, their positions of power are secured!) Philosophically, this assumption destroys the basis of all society because it relegates the individual to the position of slave each time his views on a subject place him in the minority. Clearly here again the draft strikes at the heart of man's rights, as annunciated by our own Declaration of Independence.

In addition to the moral injustice of the Selective Service system, there are several social, political and psychological effects which eat away at a free society.

Socially, the draft tends to alienate the most intelligent and creative young thinkers from the proper uses of defensive action such as individual protection of rights and private protection agency concepts. Observe the current "anti-war" movement; many members of which would totally dismantle systems for protecting us from outside aggressors.

Politically, the history of the last thirty five years bears out the danger of conscription cited so frequently on every congressional debate on the subject. The power to draft gives the executive and the military establishment an unparalleled capability to rely on a militaristic foreign policy to the point of becoming involved in an undeclared war without congressional or popular approval. The power to draft stands as an essential pillar of foreign policy. Those concerned with Americanism would do well to ponder this attack on the checks and balances of our Constitution by those who support a new draft. Another political effect was seen in the past draft utilization where deferments were used to channel registrants into activities that the government deemed desirable. Some proposals for a new compulsory service for two years do the same. The late General Hershey described channeling as "the American way of achieving what is done by direction in foreign countries where choice is not permitted." Do we really want to emulate Castro and other dictators to get youth to take "worthwhile" jobs?

A clear psychological danger is that acceptance of the draft leads to a natural rejection of other free means of getting things accomplished. If the concepts of free trade are not applied to recruitment of men for the armed forces then voluntary association may take a back seat to force in other areas of American life.

America was not always run on the assumption that it could only be defended by conscript soldiers. The large bulk of the army that served under George Washington was volunteer. Only in a few colonies was the draft employed. During the War of 1812, the administration of President Madison pressed for a draft but Congress rejected it as inconsistent with a free America. It was called in Congress a "fabric of despotism . . . a Magna Carta of slavery." During the Civil War, bloody riots in New York resulted from the use

of the draft system for a short time in the North. At the outbreak of World War I the change from earlier ideals to the current popularity of conscription was almost complete. From the beginning of World War I our leaders were so mesmerized by the success of totalitarian Prussia's conscript army that we did not even allow volunteering. World War II also brought coercion through the draft as the means for recruiting an army. The draft allowed America to launch our unwise adventures in Korea and Vietnam . . . adventures which lost us world respect and alienated millions of young Americans.

To the believer in individual rights, there can be no compromise on the draft issue. The forced conscription of young men must not begin again. The volunteer army should be highly specialized and recruited along free market lines. This army must act only to protect the lives and property of individuals as any other use is illegitimate. The long range goal is, of course, for an end to all forms of coercion. The selective service system is the most dramatic and consistent application of statist mentality in America and it must not be brought back.

America has a proud tradition of individual resistance to the draft. The call for men to be drafted in 1812 was answered by threats of internal revolution. The response in New York and Pennsylvania to the draft in the Civil War was rioting and dodging. Immigrants flooded America in the late nineteenth century fleeing the draft in Poland, Germany and Russia. In World War I individuals went to jail rather than serve. During the Vietnam war, we saw thousands fleeing to Canada, refusing to register or report, faking physical ailments, or going underground to avoid compulsory servitude. While much of that resistance was not based on consistent acceptance of libertarian ideals, the resistance to coercion of this blatant type was widespread none-the-less. There is a great need for those who do stand consistently for individual freedom to take the lead in the struggle against the draft. For if the draft is recognized for the abomination against human rights that it is it will be far easier to convince people that other forms of statism are just as alien to the American experience.

Advocates of individual rights must first oppose the enactment of compulsory registration laws, for the required registration is the first step to the return of selective servitude. If these laws to require registration pass, libertarians will and must organize resistance to them. In the long run all of our lives and principles are on the line.

Coercion gives men no special powers or abilities that they do not otherwise possess. All that which is truly worthwhile can be accomplished without aggression. Free men are not idiots or brutes—they do not need governments to force them to provide for their education, their sick, their poor, or for their old age. Historically the greatest advancements in human welfare have been made in precisely those periods with the least governmental regulation of human action.

The omnipotent state is the archaic remnant of tribal war lords and witch doctors; it is the super-parent who tells us that we are not fit to run our own lives. But there comes a time in the life of every man and society when they must leave the stifling safety of a programmed existence, discard the myths of childhood, and venture forth into the world of self-responsible adults. There are, to be sure, risks in abandoning the nursery, but no human development is possible without risk.

As libertarians we say to the world: Wake up and cut the cord. There is a world of infinite pleasure, variety and adventure open to the person with the courage to be free.

Jarret B. Wollstein

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*Dr. Murray N. Rothbard
CATO Institute*

The Society for Individual Liberty was the first national educational and activist organization dedicated to the principles of libertarianism. For more than ten years, S.I.L. has been promoting the goal of a free society in America through leadership, development of Libertarian clubs, dissemination of ideas, and encouragement of activist projects.

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SIL DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE

Adopted October 1969

As Advocates of Individual Liberty We Affirm:

That every person has an inalienable right to their own life, liberty and property;

That the only proper use of force is in retaliation against those who violate human rights;

That the basic violation of human rights consists of the initiation or the threat of the initiation of force against the individual;

That all proper social organization can only be a consequence of voluntary association between individuals;

That the only economic system consistent with human prosperity and happiness is laissez-faire capitalism;

That the ideologies and instrumentalities of coercive collectivism are the basic threat to human rights and the existence of moral human societies;

And that both moral individuals and moral societies have the obligation to act in their own rational self-interest to protect themselves from those who seek to coercively control, direct and enslave them.

With the apostles of coercion increasingly predominant in the councils of man, it is the duty of all those who value their life, liberty and property to take appropriate action—intellectual and social—to preserve and extend their freedom.

We as libertarians resolve to resist all forms of involuntary collectivism and all programs and activities of government which violate our rights and attempt to take from us the ability to set our own goals and to determine our own destiny.

We work for the day when all individuals are free, and we look forward to a society of peace, plenty and freedom where the individual's rights are truly politically inalienable. As advocates of reason and liberty we seek and will settle for no less than:

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