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The draft registration statistics in your follow-up on the "Call of the Draft" (10 May) deserve closer scrutiny than you gave them. The figures you reported—those of the Selective Service System—are seriously flawed. Independent estimates, including illegal aliens (who were not counted in the 1970 census data relied on by the Selective Service but who were required to register) and allowed for the large number of fraudulent registrations the SS had no way to identify as bogus, put non-registration three to four times higher. Consider, though, what the SS itself had admitted:

More than three times as many of us as the government had thought possible didn't register last July. The SS said—and still says—that the rest of us will "straggle" in late. But fewer than a third of the initial non-registrants have registered in the nine months since, despite periodic threats of prosecution. Meanwhile, in January, non-registration nearly doubled. (Significantly, the number of people writing "I am registering under protest" or "I am a conscientious objector" on their registration cards fell by half in the same period. As they learned that no such statements constitute, as the Times incorrectly reported, "claiming CO status" nor are they entered into the SS computer files, more and more opponents of the draft chose not to register at all.)

The overflowing federal courts process 40,000 criminal cases each year, and the overflowing federal prisons hold 25,000 people at a time. Dealing with this accelerating crime wave (a third of a million Selective Service felonies have been committed in the past nine months) would require that the federal judicial and penal systems be multiplied tenfold and dedicated to draft cases to the exclusion of all other federal crimes.

The most thorough study of the Vietnam draft, "Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation" (Baskir and Strauss, 1978) found that, "In the Vietnam era, just 1% of all draft-age men failed to register, and another 1% refused induction. Still, the draft barely survived the challenge." Today, non-registration has reached 13%, and a survey of high school seniors by the National Center for Education Statistics found that, given the choice of compulsory military or civilian service, 30% would refuse both.

Yet just a week earlier ("The Vietnam Generation", 3 May) the Times editorialized of today's teenaged students, "The peace movement was something their parents, older people, did. It's not for them. In fact, they find it hard to picture those parents evading the draft, marching on Washington, going limp before the police. They [are] a new generation with a disturbing influence in violence." That same day 100,000 people—most of us young, many of us students, so the Times reported—marched on Washington to protest the draft and the other aspects of the U.S. war build-up. Organized by a coalition of socialist, communist, and anarchists revolutionaries, it was the largest gathering of the peace movement in years. Despite considerable provocation from a handful of counterdemonstrators, there was not a single instance of violence. Do your editorial writers read the news?

Who, for that matter, is "evading" the draft? Is it evasive for me to risk several years in prison rather than concealing that I didn't register when I was supposed to? I am confronting the draft, not evading it by registering and hoping someone else will be picked. The SS evades the draft by pretending that "Selective Service registration" (never "draft registration") is not preparation for a draft. Registration may not accomplish much with a draft (then-candidate Reagan pointed out that "registration will save a scant seven days of the six-month mobilization period") but it will certainly accomplish nothing without a draft.

I have no illusions. I do not expect President Reagan to proclaim an end to draft registration, much less to pardon those who have broken a law he said "should be rejected". Congress appropriated the money for registration, and bills are pending to mandate continued registration (H.R. 1500) and to resume conscription (H.R. 1210, S. 756). Selective Service wants to begin selective (read: token) prosecution of non-registrants as soon as possible, and I—more for speaking out than for refusing to register—am likely to be one of those selected. The government will not abandon the draft until its failure is much more widely recognized than at present. This may not be for some time, possibly not until it has tried to begin inductions. But the evidence is already clear—to those who will look—that registration cannot be enforced and a draft is impossible.

Perhaps the most revealing admission of the SS was made to the Supreme Court last summer. According to the Times (20 July 1980, p. 28), "The appeal from the Justice Department asserted that the order preventing registration from proceeding 'injects insurmountable confusion into a registration system that depends upon the voluntary cooperation of eligible individuals.' We're not confused; neither are we fooled. It's our choice, and we won't go.

Yours in Peace,

Edward John Hasbrouck