

STATEMENT OF DR. THOMAS REEVES, NATIONAL COUNCIL TO REPEAL THE DRAFT

Committee on Resolutions (Platform)
Subcommittee VII, "Defense and Foreign Policy"
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I am Thomas Reeves, former National Director and now Sponsor of the National Council to Repeal the Draft. I have been professor of political science at Schiller College (W.Germany), Federal City College and American University (Washington, D.C.), and Mt.St.Mary's College (Emmitsburg, Maryland). I am co-author with Karl Hess of THE END OF THE DRAFT, published by Random House. I am Peace Secretary for the Middle Atlantic Region of the American Friends Service Committee and an ordained Methodist minister.

The National Council to Repeal the Draft has the active support and participation of more than forty national organizations. This coalition includes a unique range in American politics. Conservatives, liberals and "radicals"; Republicans and Democrats, black city dwellers and southern farmers have joined in an out-pouring of sentiment against what they consider an intolerable institution, an immoral departure from our tradition of liberty and an outright violation of our Constitution. Our organization unites groups which represent the majority of the population of the United States! All of them take stands for total draft repeal and an end to the whole Selective Service System. Most of them have been on record since 1965 or before. They include such diverse groups as the Y.M.C.A., the Ripon Society, the Young Americans for Freedom, many entire denominations including the United Methodists, Episcopalians, Unitarian-Universalists, American Baptists and United Presbyterians; also labor unions, peace groups, student organizations and women's groups. Leading individuals and groups within the black community have been virtually unanimous in their strong support.

The record is now crystal clear. It is clear as to the remarkable unanimity of Americans for draft repeal. Every major national poll since 1968 shows a large majority oppose the draft. The average of young people polled over the past five years is nearly 80% for draft repeal. At the 1971 hearings on Selective Service before the Senate Armed Services Committee, forty-one of the forty-six non-government individuals and thirty-three of the forty-three non-governmental groups testified with extensive documentation and evidence of popular support for outright abolition of the draft.

The record is also clear as to the advisability of ending the draft and the feasibility of a genuine all-volunteer armed force. The extraordinarily thorough research of President Nixon's Gates Commission lead them not only to support the notion of a volunteer force, but to conclude that efficiency as well as constitutionality and political considerations demanded the end of the draft by June, 1971. That Commission included the former Secretary of Defense, Thomas Gates, and also two former Supreme Allied Commanders in Europe - Generals Gruenther and Norstad - and a whole range of economic, political and military experts. It documented its finding in hundreds of pages of exhaustive studies ranging from budgetary implications and the effect on volunteers and the reserves to historical and social matters related to the draft as well as specific and special problems like productivity, recruitment and health services.

Since the Gates Report, both conscription and the proposed return to the American tradition of volunteers have been under the closest scrutiny, with the result that every possible kink in the voluntary system has been worked out and every substantial criticism investigated and disproven. Such was the verdict of the bulk of 846 pages of the 1971 Armed Services Committee hearings in the Senate and the equivalent Armed Services hearings in the House, as well as further investigation by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Such has also been the evidence collected by the Department of Defense, the White House Conference on Children and Youth, the Presidential Task Force on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, and every other civilian and military group commissioned to consider the matter.

The success of the initial steps toward "Zero Draft" has been so great that even former critics have been persuaded. The vice-chairman of this Committee, Senator Allott, after earlier misgivings, said in the Senate on August 1 of this year, "...I cannot foresee any reason, short of an international crisis, for the extension of induction authority next spring." Senator Allott's further remarks may be taken as a summary of the basic position of most serious students of military manpower today: "...It is time to survey the progress we have made toward ending the draft and to examine the final steps that should be taken to insure that we achieve complete freedom from conscription by the time the current induction authority expires next June....Everyone benefits from a military dependent on voluntary enlistment rather than conscription. The armed services is clearly benefiting from increased professionalism. There will be less turnover and less turbulence in assignments, producing more effective man-days and better team effort....It is the pressure of having to attract and retain good men that has and will continue to impel these improvements."

Secretary Melvin Laird himself, in a recent speech and an article quoted in the August Senate debates, has concluded: "At this time next year, the military draft will be a relic of history." (Alex., Va., GAZETTE, July 28, 1972). "We're changing the Department of Defense for the first time since 1939. Since 1939... the manpower requirement as far as the Department is concerned has been made up of conscript labor, where young people did not have a choice. Each time there was a manpower problem ...be it in the Army, Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, all the personnel officers had to do was look to Selective Service and say, well, we can fill those requirements by putting a little more pressure on as far as Selective Service is concerned....We should stop using conscript labor to meet the national security requirements of our country....We are making the change and we are going to make the transition so that on June 30 of next year we will be in a volunteer situation...."

In the past there have been three general areas of concern about ending the draft. These have been (1) the cost of a volunteer system, (2) the efficacy of our defense without the draft, and (3) the impact of a voluntary military on justice and democracy.

The argument that a volunteer system would cost too much was initially and effectively countered by Milton Friedman, among others, who has never been answered in his detailed description of the terrific economic, social and human costs of the draft. The Gates Commission and later Pentagon studies showed that savings in Veterans' benefits and training costs would make up much of the increases for pay raises in a volunteer force. Finally, the whole nation now seems to agree that it is unjust to pay our military less than competitive wages for their hard work. The Congress has moved America far in these past two years from our earlier position as the nation with the poorest paid enlistees in the developed world. Fortunately, we are finally prepared to meet the fair price of military labor as we have been in the past for military supplies.

Some liberals, including a few Republicans, have argued that the volunteer military would be both less "democratic" and less "just". In the first place, they claim the draft is a "leaven in the military for dissent against unnecessary wars." Obviously, such an argument forgets the American tradition which believes freedom of choice is more important than other considerations. It ignores the militarization of the nation through the draft and the fact that the entire Vietnam buildup was based upon the draft and succeeded initially precisely because the draft allowed such an increase in the military without a public national debate. In any case, the argument has been made moot by President Nixon's dramatic announcement on June 28, that no draftees would be sent to Vietnam unless they volunteer. The second "liberal" argument favoring the draft holds that unduly large numbers of economic and ethnic minorities will create an inequitable imbalance in the armed forces. Almost all spokesmen for these groups agree with Dr. Ralph Abernathy who called this notion "paternalistic." All evidence is that such fears are entirely unfounded. In a recent conversation with Assistant Secretary of Defense Roger Kelley, I was told of very recent studies (also mentioned in the August 1 Congressional Record) which indicate that the racial and income balance of a volunteer armed force will be far better than at any time under conscription.

Perhaps of greatest concern to the members of this subcommittee are questions of national security without the draft. It was initially feared that too few volunteers would appear to take the place of draftees. Prophecies of gigantic short-falls have simply not been true. Secretary Kelley told me in our conversation in late July that this year's shortfall will be little more than 44,000 out of 2.24 million men - certainly not significant to national security. This shortfall would occur if the draft stopped immediately and if recruiting trends did not continue to increase. Senator Mark Hatfield noted on August 1, that figures now show that the Reserves and the National Guard have also not been drastically reduced by lower draft calls. As Senator Goldwater said, the make-up and morale of the Reserves will benefit from the end of "draft pressure." Even in quality, the question most cited a year ago as a final reason to delay ending the draft - the voluntary military seems to have proven itself superior. Aside from the general improvement in prestige as a professional force, the skills level of the military gone up since the draft was reduced. Lt. Gen. George Forsythe,

quoted by Senator Hatfield in the August 1 Congressional Record, spoke from his experience as responsible officer for the move toward volunteers in the army. He declared that 12% more high school graduates volunteered last year than in 1970, and that grades on standardized tests indicated a significant increase in ability on the part of volunteers - placing them far above the level of the average draftee.

It is now quite plain that the voluntary military is not only politically and morally preferable for a free America, but is the most efficient and appropriate force for the new foreign policies initiated by President Nixon for the coming decade. In the words of Assistant Secretary Kelley, "It is an idea whose time has come."

Although I have been moved to summarize these well-established facts, it is scarcely necessary for me to convince this body. You represent the Party that has taken the lead in preparing America for the all-volunteer armed force. To do other than end the draft would now be wholly out of keeping, not only with the history and principles of the Republican Party, but with the policies and planning of the present Administration and its military advisers.

What is important is to emphasize what a "voluntary military" must mean if it is to be genuine - more than a mirage to quiet dissent about the Pentagon. Ladies and Gentlemen, I will be frank. Progress thus far toward Zero Draft calls has impressed America's young voters (and many others) more than any other single policy pursued by this Republican Administration. The other Party, for the first time in its history, has been moved to support draft abolition in order to appeal to those same youth. Although the draft may not now seem an important and immediate campaign issue, it continues to be of life and death urgency to millions of young citizens.

It is most important for the Republican Party now to assure them that the draft is really dying. There is still some doubt in their minds.

Despite all the talk about the voluntary military, some of them are still being drafted or prosecuted for refusing induction. Despite promises to end the draft, they hear rumors that "zero draft calls" are a trick. They fear that the draft will be reduced to zero only so long as withdrawals from Southeast Asia are fashionable and only until the military feels an increased manpower is again needed. They have not yet heard the firm word from the Pentagon that next July will not only mean that no one is drafted, but will mean that there is no more authority to draft anyone.

This may seem rather a minute point to you. To them and to parents of children who reach draft age in the next ten years it is a very major item! These people heard only last May that the Secretary of Defense favored "universal national service" if the "volunteer system" didn't work out. That would mean an INCREASE in the draft to include every man and woman in the nation! (Most legal experts agree that the women's rights amendment will make an all-male draft impossible). These people need to hear that the draft IS going to end not for a few months, but for good.

We of the National Council to Repeal the Draft join the praise for your Party and our President as he has approached the zero draft call. BUT ZERO DRAFT IS NOT ABOLITION OF THE DRAFT. Next June 30, the draft must really be ended. This ought to mean no draft whatsoever - no arbitrary, antiquated Selective Service machinery, no draft boards, and no compulsory registration. These are all the mechanics of a thoroughly anti-democratic system - one which Secretary Laird called "one of the least democratic elements" in American life. There is utterly no justification, moral or security, for their maintenance. The draft does not prepare us for emergencies since draftees take time to train. Registration, in case of war, could proceed very rapidly by computer - as it did without computer in World War I and World War II. Compulsory registration is an affront to young Americans and an invasion of their privacy almost as much as the draft. Surely, Senator Goldwater is correct when he says, "I am just old-fashioned enough to believe that there still live among us a great many Americans who think enough of their freedom to fight for it."

We favor absolute repeal of the draft laws. We believe any draft measure, including a stand-by draft, is un-Constitutional. Even in time of war, we believe a nation which is threatened must be defended voluntarily if it is worth defending. It was in that spirit that I proposed to the international Bertrand Russell conference meeting in Stockholm two years ago that all nations, including the Soviet Union and People's China, repeal conscription. Needless to say I was booed by some Russian delegates and opposed by those two great powers. I did have great support from peaceful delegates from all nations,, especially from neutrals and smaller states. I would hope that the United States, of all nations the oldest champion of freedom, would now lead the world away from the idea that the State can command obedience to the point of death and killing. Once that evil doctrine is buried, the world will have reached a consciousness of individual rights that will make wars difficult if not impossible. The United States' unilateral declaration in favor of voluntarism and against conscription will both increase her stature among free men and improve her posture for defense.

We support the dismantling of Selective Service at once. We supported Senator Hatfield's amendment two weeks ago because we believe it is now possible and imperative to end the draft once and for all.

But we try to be realists. We believe our success thus far is predicated upon a grasp of what is politically feasible as well as what is morally and rationally right. I urge you, at the least, to make it clear NOW, that Republicans do not want the draft again short of war.

Some say this Hearing is superfluous - that the platform has already been written. But I believe the Republican Party is still open to making improvements and adjustments within the scope of the program already set by Mr. Nixon. For that reason, I make a suggestion I believe will be helpful to Republicans as well as to those who seek to end the draft.

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Let the Party and the President speak out now without confusion.
You may rightly praise the Republican record on the voluntary
military. Then go on to say:

"We will strive to end draft calls by Innauguration Day.
We will support the expiration of the draft by June 30, 1973,
together with the President's induction authority. We support
only a minimal stand-by draft thereafter, to be activated in
time of war or major national emergency at the initiative of
the President, and only by joint Act of Congress."

In so doing, you will have completed one of the finest actions in
Republican history. You will have ended twenty years of
inexcusable injustice. I believe you will also have gone far
toward winning the respect and loyalty of millions of young
Americans.

Respectfully,

THOMAS C. REEVES, PhD
NATIONAL COUNCIL TO REPEAL THE DRAFT

An Urgent Appeal
to
Delegates of the
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

REPUBLICANS CAN PROMISE
"NO MORE DRAFT NEXT YEAR"!

from the NATIONAL COUNCIL TO REPEAL THE DRAFT
(The draft repeal coalition includes the Ripon Society, the Young Americans for Freedom, the Y.M.C.A., the N.A.A.C.P., the National Student Association, the American Baptist Convention, the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church and more than 30 other national groups)

Richard Nixon has gone a long way towards eliminating America's greatest scandal: the peacetime draft. He reduced yearly draft calls from 300,000 to 50,000. He directed the Pentagon to study and implement an All-Volunteer Armed Force. Republican appointee Assistant Secretary of Defense Roger Kelley has pushed the notion of volunteers and worked to end the un-American practice of conscripts. Melvin Laird promised this month: "We will go to zero by June 30."

But Zero Draft Calls is NOT abolition of the draft. Mr. Nixon promised in a New York TIMES ad of Sept. 11, 1968, "I will, after Vietnam, eliminate Selective Service completely." Millions of young Americans and their families expect the President to keep his promise. In fact, the young voters almost unanimously favor total draft repeal. The average per centage of 18 to 26 year olds polled by Harris and Gallup in the past five years is 80%.

The youth of American, including the 650,000 draftee under this administration, are watching you. They want a clear answer. WILL YOU ALLOW THE DRAFT TO EXPIRE NEXT YEAR? Do you want a genuine volunteer military - or one augmented by slave labor when the President desires?

Republicans should speak clearly now. They should promise that the draft will be ended entirely on or before June 30. They should promise to thus return to Congress the responsibility of waging wars; to take the enormous powers of the draft out of the hands of one man. Once and for all Republicans should affirm that slavery in ANY form is un-American.

To "go to a volunteer system" cannot mean a stand-by-draft activated by the President. It SHOULD mean no draft whatsoever - not even registration. General LeRoy H. Anderson (Ret.) has testified that even at the beginning of World War II (when he was responsible for manpower decisions), the onerous conscription machinery was unnecessary. The Reserves should provide for emergencies, but - as Senator Goldwater pointed out - the effect of the draft on Reserve make-up and morale is devastating.

If a stand-by draft is continued, it cannot be left under Executive control. Such a system would create even more uncertainty for youth than presently. It would create a "volunteer force" in name only. It would be a fraud.

Republicans can win the confidence of youth. They should crown their achievement of decreased draft calls by ending the draft altogether. Urge the President to keep his promise: ABOLISH THE DRAFT including the President's induction power. Anything short of that leaves room for doubt. Many youth do doubt the sincerity of the Party's pledge - especially after the Administration fought Senator Hatfield's attempt last year and again this month to implement the President's own Gates Commission proposal to end the draft this year.

Some believe the reduction of draft calls and the promise of a volunteer force has been one factor in winning youth from negativism and toward constructive projects. A clear stand now, consistent with the principles and history of the Republican Party, could be decisive in winning their support for Richard Nixon in 1972.

DELEGATES: Cut the confusion, leave Congress no choice: NO DRAFT NEXT YEAR!

N.C.R.D SPONSORS INCLUDE

Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, Maj. Gen. LeRoy H. Anderson (Ret.), Kenneth E. Boulding, Harvey Cox, Milton Friedman, Karl Hess, Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, Lewis Mumford, Walter Y. Oi, Tony Randall, Thomas Reeves, Rear Admiral Arnold True (Ret.), George Wald.

REPUBLICANS ON THE DRAFT:

Abraham Lincoln: "Give the President that power and you make of him a King George."

Robert Taft: "In creating peacetime conscription, we launch a course which easily leads to tyranny."

Richard Nixon: "By upholding the cause of freedom without conscription, we will demonstrate the superiority of a society based on the belief in the dignity of man over a society based on the supremacy of the State."

Melvin Laird: "We should stop using conscript labor...." (August, 1972)

Barry Goldwater: "I am just old-fashioned enough to believe that there still live among us a great many Americans who think enough of their freedom that they are willing to fight for it."

Mark Hatfield: (Chief champion of draft repeal in the United States) "Clearly, the draft is not needed to meet manpower requirements..... It is not needed to maintain some sense of equity and justice, as some would have us believe... Involuntary servitude, which is what military conscription is today, is the most iniquitous institution in our society."

Aside from the Republicans above, among the stalwarts in the fight for total abolition of the draft in Congress this year and last have been: Senators Baker, Brooke, Cook, Mathias, Packwood, Pearson, Schweiker and Taft; Representatives Steiger, Whalen, Goldwater, Crane, Schwengel and Halpern.

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