

ON MEETING THE NATION'S NEED FOR YOUNG MEN IN MILITARY SERVICE

Study prepared by the Institute of Politics of The John Fitzgerald Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Many teachers in American colleges and universities have been concerned about the draft. They naturally are, not only because the draft is related to war in general and to the war in Vietnam in particular, but also because the draft raises some fundamental questions about the obligations of citizenship in a democracy and the way those obligations are divided among the citizens. Moreover, most of the students we teach, and even many of the teachers among us, are qualified by age, health, and education, to perform military service. A main feature of the present draft is that it singles out college students, and their teachers, as a group especially eligible for deferment; we are bound to be concerned with the wisdom of such an arrangement.

In January of this year several of us on the Harvard faculty, all holding opinions about the draft but not the same opinion, discovered that the strength of our opinions was out of proportion to our knowledge of the present selective service system, our acquaintance with alternatives, and our understanding of the issues raised by a choice among alternatives. Holding widely different views about military and foreign policy, and especially about the war in Vietnam, and differing greatly in the emphasis we attached to different consequences of the military manpower system, we wondered whether we could arrive, through patient exploration and argument, at an agreed set of recommendations. We knew we could not reach agreement on every matter of principle that would arise; we hoped we could reach agreement on a set of recommendations compatible with the differing premises from which we approached the problem.

Under the auspices of the Institute of Politics in the John F. Kennedy School of Government, a faculty study group was organized that met regularly during February, March, and April. Comprising a dozen members, mostly faculty, it brought together not only diverse opinions but diverse fields as well—economics, political science, law and philosophy. We drew on materials contained in Congressional hearings, in the report of the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, and in other studies done both inside and outside of government. We considered many alternatives, each in the light of several criteria—fairness with respect to who serves, fairness in respect to conditions of service, efficiency in the use of the nation's manpower, efficiency in the use of military manpower within the services, the impact on race relations and on education and poverty, the impacts of alternative systems on politics and on policy-making, the satisfaction or resentment of those rejected and those selected, the technical workability of alternative systems, the uncertainty or disruption in the lives of young men, the career opportunities in military service, and matters of conscience, tradition, and law.

We still differ over the war in Vietnam and over other issues of military and foreign policy. We still differ in the importance we attach to the several criteria we examined. We still differ on a number of guesses and estimates about the results of certain policies for which the evidence is scanty. Somewhat to our surprise, we reached unanimous agreement on what we perceive to be the main policy issues.

If our recommendations carry any claim to attention, it is not because we were, as individuals, specially qualified in the subject nor because three months of collective study have made us experts on military manpower. Nor is it because we in any way represent Harvard University or any other organization, governmental or private; we represent nobody but ourselves. If our recommendations carry any weight it is precisely because we differ in our politics, in our policy preferences and in our professional interests, and yet these recommendations, after our three months of wide ranging discussion and argument, appeal to us all.