

REORGANIZATION OF THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

The Marshall Commission concluded that "the United States has outgrown its Selective Service System." It presents a wealth of logic, statistics, facts and findings which reinforce this conclusion. This information also justifies a second conclusion: that the System has operated for 25 years with dedication and selfless patriotism on the part of those officials charged with its administration.

Today's structure is built on the concept of the local boards, which the Selective Service characterizes as little groups of neighbors on whom is placed the responsibility to determine who is to serve the Nation in the Armed Forces and who is to serve in industry, agriculture, and other deferred classifications.

In point of fact, this characterization is inaccurate. The Marshall Commission points out that "the 'neighborly' character of local boards seems to exist more in theory than in fact."

There are a number of reasons for this. Most boards in urban areas operate in anonymity. More than half of metropolitan local boards are centrally located and operated. A large percentage of local board registrants have not lived in the local board area for years. Local board clerks perform a great deal of the work—to such an extent nearly 20 percent of local boards report that nine out of ten classification decisions were virtually automatic.

Based on these facts, the Marshall Commission recommended a restructuring and consolidation of the Selective Service System along these lines:

A national office, similar to that now existing;

A series of regional offices, perhaps eight in number, corresponding for national security reasons to the eight regions of the Office of Emergency Planning;

A series of area offices, numbering 300 to 500, corresponding to the 231 standard metropolitan statistical areas, the 149 cities over 25,000 outside these SMSA's at least one area office in every State;

Appeals boards operating contiguous to these three types of offices.

Under this plan, registration and classification would be handled at the area offices. Local boards would be retained, but their function would be changed. The local boards would become the registrant's court of first appeal, and they would have the authority to sustain or overturn classifications made in the area offices. This insures that the great strength of the local boards—a group of citizens divorced from the Federal system—would be applied where it is most critical.

My bill would change the present law by requiring that the system be reorganized as proposed by the Marshall Commission. President Johnson indicated a year ago that he was establishing a task force within the Government to review the Marshall Commission recommendations, to determine their "cost, the method of implementation, and their effectiveness." I am sure that by now this task force has completed its work, and that its findings can speed development of the new structure.

This new structure can increase the likelihood that the draft law will be administered not by a rule of discretion, but by a rule of law.

CONCLUSION

I have outlined above a brief explanation of the major changes my bill would make in our selective service laws. These changes are badly needed.

The recent announcement regarding the termination of graduate school deferments is yet another illustration. That action will make about 225,000 graduating college students and first year graduate students immediately eligible for the draft in June. The draft call for the year beginning July 1 is expected to be about 240,000. In other words, nearly all the draftees will be graduate students and recent college graduates.

The army is not happy with this fact. Neither are the graduate schools whose enrollment will be drastically reduced. And neither are the graduate students whose course of study will be interrupted. It has been reported that other methods of handling the transition between blanket graduate student deferment and prohibition against graduate student deferment were recommended. One of the fairest of these was made by Nathan Pusey, president of Harvard University. It has also been reported that the Selective Service System advised that it did not have the management skills to put any of these alternative recommendations into effect.

That is, to my mind, a serious indictment of our Selective Service System. Because of its archaic structure and procedures, we were forced to adopt a mechanism which satisfies no one.