

Now, I can proudly announce that I am a member of the Veterans Committee, that the AMVETS commander recommends this and it is well received and we are on our way.

I certainly want to thank you for this.

I have just one question and I pose it to all interested veterans in this room. I don't want you to tell me where you stand on it—I will tell you right now, I am opposed to doing away with the type of service—I think we can do a better job under our draft law, possibly through some type of more fair method; but when we go into possibly a volunteer army, go into the mercenary type of soldier, which some countries have tried—and I am a great believer as a citizen that you have a responsibility to serve your country and a privilege to do so—I am wondering if your legislative committee has been giving some thought to what will be the thrust of the veterans' programs in the event we do go into a purely voluntary army, in the event we should end this Vietnam war and some of the other trouble spots in the world. We know the veterans' programs have grown up because of a grateful nation; grateful to their men who have been plucked out of civilian life and served their country.

Now, what will be the thrust of the programs if we do do away with that any say it is purely voluntary? Those of you who do serve will be paid wages comparable with private industry. What do you think of the veterans' programs in the future in the event we come to that type of military service?

Mr. FERRINO. I don't want to dwell on the word "mercenary" but this concept is a fairly new one in our culture, in our generation and in the history of our country with the possible exception of areas in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.

I would hazard a statement that the safety of our way of life and our present way of life, and our great American democracy—if it would be jeopardized by the possible experiments of a mercenary army, then I would oppose it. I, as an individual. I am not mandated by my organization to speak on this topic.

I would think that prior to any enactment of this type of legislation to implement a citizen army paid for the specific purpose of doing this rather than conscription which, I feel, is—an individual who gives service to his country, whether through conscription or whether it is through volunteering to give service to his country, it is not only a right but an honor and not only an obligation but a way of showing the feelings that he has toward his country.

Though I am not answering your question directly I know, I would feel that I wouldn't like to experiment with the safety and lives of the better than 200 million people with a program that isn't tried and true in our lifetime, and I don't know how successful it was in the past. I would caution, in my own small way, that prior to any enactment of this type of program, that it be given very careful study, as I know it will be, by the Congress of the United States.

Mr. DENNEY. Thank you, Mr. Commander.

I agree 100 percent with that. I am not sold on the idea at all that is being broached by editorial writers and different groups in this country. But the reason I posed the question, definitely, if this should come to pass, it is going to have a drastic effect on the veterans' programs now in existence and those to come in the future.