

# A View From The Right

By: C. William George

I find it quite remarkable that the present military conscription program has been so little scrutinized. By definition, a "draft" is antithetic to a free society. The priority principle of voluntarism as regards the employment of man's labor must be maintained. The concept of a "nation-in-arms" has traditionally been a Napoleonic ideal and a Prussian virtue, while in the United States and Great Britain impressment has always been held unjustifiable except when it is required for the security of the state. This principle lay behind the drafts of the Civil War, World War I and World War II, and in each instance it was understood that when national security could be maintained without conscription, the draft would be terminated.

For the most part, the practical case for a voluntary military rests on new manpower and financial possibilities for complete elimination of conscription except in emergencies. America has not had such a high percentage of its population in draft-age since the early 1800's. The number of young men is rapidly rising as the post-World War II baby-boom comes of age. About 1.1 million men turned draft-age annually in the 1950's while about 1.8 million are turning draft-age this year. By 1975 the figure will be somewhere around 2.1 million. This means an immensely expanded pool of potential volunteers. Only 38 percent of age groups turning 26 in the mid-1970's will have seen military duty, whereas 59 percent of an age group turning 26 in the early 1960's had seen military duty.

Manpower needs have been restructured with the increasing sophistication of military technology. Such people as radar technicians, who are expensive to train and then to lose, are not attracted by the draft. Ordinarily, draftees do not become highly skilled technicians. Over 500,000 men leave the military in the course of a normal year, out of a total force of between 2.7 million and 3.2 million men -- or about one out of every six men. In an article entitled "The Unsolved Problem" appearing in the June, 1964 issue of MILITARY REVIEW, Brig. Gen. Lynn D. Smith says that about 43 percent of Army men have less than a year's experience at any given time. The percentage is probably somewhat higher now with the buildup in Vietnam.

Perhaps incalculable, but certainly enormous, is the cost of the draft in money and manpower. However, it should be noted that the turnover rate for career men is only 15 percent annually. Main-

tenance of this rate throughout our military would effect an annual saving in personnel along with the time and money required to train them. This sort of rate is common in Canada's voluntary system.

Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, Director of the Selective Service System, has charged that a volunteer, all professional military would be made up of "mercenaries." By this definition the "careerists" of today would be considered "mercenaries," as well as the men who have served in the Armed Forces during the overwhelming proportion of our history when we had no draft.

Another charge leveled against the volunteer service is that it would result in a military establishment composed disproportionately of Negroes. Already, however, proportionately more Negroes than whites re-enlist in the services. This fact can be attributed to both the military's lack of racial discrimination and the present low wage levels that are more attractive to Negroes than to whites. Raising wages would thus tend to attract whites as well as Negroes.

Rep. Charles S. Joelson (D-N.J.) asserts that a volunteer military would be "unfair" because poor people would be attracted to it and would "be sent off to be killed." This argument ignores the fact that there would be an across-the-board wage raise, including the wages for officers (mostly college-educated) and other highly trained men, as well as the facts that about 80 percent of the military's jobs are non-combatant and that the statistical chance of a man dying while in the service is, based on 1965 figures, .25 percent, exactly the same as in civilian life. The policeman's job is more hazardous than most soldiers', but no one has yet proposed conscription for the police force or, for that matter, the fire department.

Some people may fear the concept of a professional military establishment untouched by the civilian influences of draftees and six-month reservists. The military has been rendered increasingly dependent upon civilian education resources because of technological change. It seems highly improbable that an institution which for over 150 years has been subject to civilian control would suddenly dominate the secretaries and deputies just because it would no longer draft 18-year-olds. For most of its life the military was a volunteer, hard-core, professional institution, and the principle of civilian control was never subverted during those years.