

Draft Must Be Abolished

By FRED STEIN

When all the facts are in, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Americans do not need the draft, and that we are long overdue in bringing to an end this invasion of the lives and liberties of our young men. The case against the draft is overwhelming. Conscription results on a deprivation of civil liberties exceeded perhaps only by criminal incarceration. Compulsory, forced labor is a blatant assault upon individual rights which, except in grave national emergency, is altogether inconsistent with the values of a free society.

By calling people whose occupation is not the military, the draft is wasteful. The turnover of conscripts exceeds 90 percent, whereas the turnover of volunteers is only 15 percent. Instead of training 50,000 men a year under a volunteer system, we train 300,000 under the draft - a waste of \$2.4 billion a year. Few conscripts re-enlist to obtain the technical skills needed to cope with the

problems of modern warfare. Volunteer recruitment would produce a more effective defense force.

The only real argument for having an involuntary draft is that the nation could not afford to raise and retain the needed men without it. There is no numerical shortage of manpower for filling the military ranks. Each year nearly four times as many men as the military needs enter the draft pool age. With more realistic service qualifications and increased wage and fringe benefits, and with an enhanced status for military careers, we can attract the men we want. The economic incentives need not be expensive. One of the main reasons for low re-enlistment of military personnel is the miserable housing supplied military families, something that could be inexpensively corrected in view of the vast real estate holding of the Federal Government.

The concept of a volunteer military is often attacked for

lack of flexibility. Actually, a volunteer military would be more flexible than the draft. Modern warfare is swift and uses highly flexible weaponry, factors making professional soldiers far more responsive than millions of men rushed to boot camp for a few months' training. Competence, not compulsion, is the key to an effective national defense.

To sum up then, conscription as it operates today is immoral, wasteful and a potential threat to America's national security. A volunteer military would result in social justice, economies and a strengthened, more responsive defense. We must not allow ourselves to forget that the draft is involuntary servitude, no matter how pressing the circumstances. Conscription is legitimate and constitutional only when Congress has no reasonable alternative - but it must always be the last desperate resort for meeting military manpower needs, never the cheap and easy expedient.