

Draft Seen as Campaign Issue

WASHINGTON (CPS) — Although Congress has extended the draft for four more years, the Selective Service System still may become a campaign issue in next year's Presidential election.

It is highly doubtful that either the Democratic or Republican candidate will pledge to abolish the draft at this time. But it appears likely that one or both parties will propose a number of reforms in the military system which, among other things, may be aimed at reducing draft calls to zero.

Such reforms would be designed to encourage more young people to volunteer for the Army by making military service appear more attractive. The most important reform would be to raise the military pay scale so that it begins at the minimum wage level of civilian rates.

Chances that increased pay for soldiers will be a campaign issue were boosted last week when a Gallup poll showed that eight out of ten persons favor such a plan. When an issue has such widespread voter appeal, Presidential candidates are not likely to ignore it.

The proposal also is becoming more popular in Congress. Twenty two Republican members recently issued a joint statement advocating certain military reforms, including an increased pay scale, as a way of reducing draft calls and putting the armed forces on a volunteer basis.

The House already has taken the initial step by passing a 5.6 per cent increase in basic pay for the nation's 3.5 million military servicemen. The bill, which would cost about \$633 million in the first year, is expected to receive positive action in the Senate.

The big question is whether or not more young people will volunteer for the military if Congress and the Pentagon increase the benefits for military personnel. Most observers agree that the military reforms will result in an increased number of volunteers, but there is disagreement over whether there would be enough new volunteers to end draft calls.

At least five Congressmen think an all-volunteer army is indeed possible if the right improvements are made. Their ideas appear in a book entitled, "How To End The Draft," which was published this month.

The Congressmen list 31 specific recommendations in what they say is "the first effort to define systematically a specific program of action which can lead to an all-volunteer service and the elimination of draft calls." They believe that if their recommendations are followed, an all-volunteer service is possible within two to five years. The estimated total maximum cost is \$3.96 billion a year.

Authors of the book are Republicans Robert T. Stafford, Frank J. Horton, Richard S. Schweiker, Garner E. Shriver, and Charles W. Whalen, Jr. They emphasize they are not ad-

vocating that the Selective Service System be abolished, but are merely recommending reforms which "individually and collectively can work to reduce the size of the draft calls, hopefully down to zero," even under present circumstances.

But, says Douglas F. Bailey, research director for the five Congressmen, "If escalation of the war continued, resulting in the need for more servicemen, there would still have to be some draft. I don't think we could get that many to volunteer. But I think this plan will be effective in ending the draft under the present situation and particularly under real peacetime circumstances."

Many of the recommendations require no Congressional action and could be implemented immediately by the Department of Defense.

The major proposal needing legislative action involves military pay increases. "As long as beginning servicemen get paid less than the minimum wage required by law, there is no hope of ever getting rid of the draft," Rep. Stafford says. "If military pay scales are not made commensurate with civilian pay scales, many young men who may wish to serve may not do so for they cannot afford to make the financial sacrifice."

Bailey predicts that legislation necessary to encourage an all-volunteer service "will either be passed next year or in 1969 under a Republican President and a new Congress."

One problem, he feels, is that President Johnson will not want to endorse the proposals since they are being pushed by Republicans. But he thinks Johnson will push for them anyway if and when he feels it will be to his political advantage. And Bailey thinks that all the potential Republican candidates for President will endorse the proposals and strive for an all-volunteer service.

In addition to reforming the pay scale, the five Congressmen are suggesting a new program of retirement benefits, expanded educational programs, a higher and fixed recruitment advertising budget, and expansion of a program to replace some non-combat uniform personnel with civilians.

They also recommend requirements that standards of acceptability for voluntary enlistment not be more difficult than they are for the draft. (At the present time, in both the areas of mental and "moral"

standards, it is possible to be unacceptable for voluntary enlistment but to be drafted nonetheless).

The proposals of the Republican Congress could provide the basis for a major issue in the GOP platform. And if polls continue to indicate the overwhelming majority of the voters favor the plan, President Johnson and the Democrats may be forced to respond in some way.