
Defense Report

AUSA



Even Editorial Writers Owe Their Readers An Informed Opinion

In a recent edition of The Washington POST, William Greider, the editor of the *Outlook* section, said "The draft is a terrible idea being promoted by a strange coalition of conservatives and liberals." It seems that Mr. Greider might have served the purpose of his argument better by first finding out just what is being "promoted," by whom and why.

There are at least three broad approaches being pressed. Within each of these general categories there are several variations but for the sake of simplicity, and to provide Mr. Greider with a starting point for his education on the issue, the basic ideas are: Universal/National Service, in which everyone within prescribed age limits would be obliged to perform some sort of service; an active Selective Service System to supplement or replace, as necessary, the volunteer concept; and, a revitalized Selective Service System capable of responding quickly to emergency demands for manpower. All approaches assume the rightness of the notion that responsibility for preservation of the Republic rests on the shoulders of its citizens.

And yet, in response to a proposal by another journalist, Mr. Greider cried that to force *his* children to serve in one of these ways is a disproportionate price for them to pay. Has Mr. Greider asked himself what a fair price might be for his children to continue living under our system? It is inconceivable that a man of Mr. Greider's obvious intelligence and perception has failed to see the economic, social and political perils that surround the nation—and only a few of them are the product of the "government bureaucrat, civilian or military . . ." whom he accuses of wanting to control the destiny of his children.

Mr. Greider asked to be given a practical, homely reason connected to America's real interests before he concedes that his children should be drafted. If he had been reading the news pages of the Washington POST he would have been exposed to some very good reasons, the most recent of which is the escalating turmoil in the Persian Gulf area. Whether we like it or not, that rocky, sandy, oily corner of the world is of crushing importance to America.

The United States today does not have the capability to mobilize manpower in defense of its national objectives. Our reserve forces are desperately short of people. The Selective Service skeleton cannot do its job. The correction of these shortcomings surpasses the need to move toward national service or to write off the All Volunteer Force as a complete failure.

Thinking citizens, and particularly those parents who hope their children will see nothing but peace, understand the need to have the military deterrence and the strength of will that tells the rest of the world we intend to survive. That deterrence is observably hollow today.