

Benefits of the draft

Let me enthusiastically affirm Fred Reed's thoughtful conclusion (Daily News, Oct. 23) that society would benefit from a reinstatement of the the draft. The moral issues involved are perhaps the most profound any nation must decide, and, so far, we have failed to address them adequately.

In 1962, I decided, at the last minute, not to appear at my draft board hearing, where I was to argue my case for conscientious objector status. I realized that I was not a pacifist, and I did not believe that CO status was justified on any other basis.

Later, I understood that the question of whether young men avoided the draft on moral grounds, or were simply looking out for their own skins, was irrelevant compared to the intellectual and moral failures by which Washington's "best and brightest" sent America's youth to die in Vietnam.

That this could happen required the detachment Reed describes, as well as a particular self-serving belief on the part of many affluent parents: My kid is too good to go through the dirty work of killing — let some poor schlock who never finished high school soil his hands so that my son can become a doctor/lawyer/teacher . . .

The military needs professionals to provide continuity and competence. It also needs the leveling effect of a true cross-section of young Americans rotating through the services. If every young American bears a guaranteed and equal liability to serve (through a no-exceptions lottery, for example), the affluent contributors to congressional campaigns, who are also the parents of our profession-bound youth, will be sure to pay more attention when Washington's fear-mongers start talking about sending young men to kill and die overseas.

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