



Center on Conscience & War

National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors

No News: A Special Skills Draft?

March 15, 2004

During the past couple of days some newspapers across the country have been reporting that Selective Service is in the process of creating procedures for a “special skills” draft, which will conscript people with computer and foreign language skills. These [news articles](#) are reading too much into too little.

J.E. McNeil, Executive Director of the Center responds:

Last September I had a lengthy discussion with Lew Brodsky, Acting Director of Selective Service, Dick Flahavan's boss and the guy with the most seniority there. I will note, for the record, Lew Brodsky has been known to call me to tell me when there is new legislation on Selective Service. Lew told me that at the VA/HUD (committee in charge of funding Selective Service) hearing in February when they had to justify their budget, they instead spent a great deal of time justifying their existence. (I was glad to hear of that since we have spent several years trying to get them defunded). So they decided that they should look at other ways to rationalize their existence (My translation of his words to me). As part of this process, they decided to look at the possibility of not just the doctor's draft that Congress asked them to consider in the early '90s, but also other specialties that the Pentagon might need. The study justifies their existence for one year just because they were making the study and now they are making up the procedure to do it for the medical draft only. And it makes them look even more viable since they could help the Pentagon in a crisis shortfall. But remember they spent years devising a procedure (two actually) for an across the board draft and that has gotten them no closer to that actually happening.

We have been saying for several years the most likely way for the draft to come back would be for medical personnel or computer or other specialties. This merely confirms what we have been saying. The most politically viable draft is a targeted one.

But the issue of an across the board draft or a targeted will not be coming from the Pentagon or Selective Service. It will be driven by the long-term vision of Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld to indoctrinate our youth via a draft.

In our conversations with Flahavan at Selective Service today, March 15, 2004, we received additional confirmation that the only power they currently have (without Congressional intervention) is to write up some procedures for a medical draft. While these procedures may be transferable to another targeted draft, there is nothing new about a federal agency writing up procedures. It's business as usual.

But this only underscores why it is so important for everyone to participate in our Lobbying Day on May 14. See our web page at www.nisbco.org for details.

Yours for Peace and Justice,
J. E. McNeil