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## UNIVERSAL SERVICE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ALL-VOLUNTEER ARMED SERVICES

*The Nixon administration has committed itself to working toward an all-volunteer armed force after the conclusions of the Vietnamese war. The reaction in the military and in Congress, however, has been somewhat less than enthusiastic. Still another possibility for solving the Nation's manpower needs is Universal Service, a proposal which would require all citizens between the ages of 18 and 20 to serve the Government in some capacity, either in the military or in some form of social or community endeavor.*

An article prepared by

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The first instance in Western literature of an attempt to devise an ideal way to recruit and structure military forces into the fabric of a society was probably Plato's dialog, *The Republic*. This same general effort has continued over the intervening two and a half millenia, either aided or handicapped by changing social, political, and economic conditions.

The effort to devise the most acceptable method for recruiting and organizing armed forces appeared to be an especially acute problem in the United States in early 1970 as the Nation faced the new decade and the remainder of the 20th century. The American people seemed weary from 30 years of alternating hot and cold war and preferred to turn their attentions toward a wide variety of urgent domestic problems. Moreover, many Americans appeared to

be caught in the grip of an agonizing concern over fundamental social values, customs, laws, and processes. Numerous forms of established order and established authority were under attack, in some cases violent attack. At times it appeared that the very fabric of society was beginning to unravel. Basic uncertainties led to a sense of national drift, if not paralysis, and made it very difficult to determine with any degree of precision just how many Americans could be relied on to give strong support to any particular program or course of action.

Yet, many kinds of urgent international problems remained on the global agenda as the 1960's gave way to the 1970's, and most of these involved the United States, whether Americans liked it or not. It was clear enough that the United States, either by action or by

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inaction, would play a major role in determining how most of these problems would be dealt with. Some of these problems would conceivably require the application of some kind and degree of military force, and some of this military force would conceivably have to be supplied by the United States. It was interesting to note that not even the most militant critics of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia argued that the United States should abolish all of its armed forces of all kinds. On the contrary, earlier appeals for "general and complete disarmament" were curiously absent from most of the antiwar and antimilitary expressions of the late 1960's and early 1970. The antiwar and antimilitary critics appeared to pay relatively little attention to the administration's efforts to reduce the probability of major international violence through the so-called "SALT" talks and equally little attention to proposals for force reductions in Europe and elsewhere. But, if there was a crude and inarticulate public consensus that the United States needed to retain some kind and degree of armed forces for the foreseeable future, there was little apparent agreement on (1) how to recruit them, (2) how to organize them, (3) how much would be enough, and (4) how and when they should be deployed in accordance with what national purpose, strategy, and tactics.

These complicated questions are all related to each other. It is impossible to answer any one without some effort to answer the others. By one kind of logic, the last question should be answered first, in an effort to specify a grand national sense of mission and purpose leading to a national strategy in foreign affairs. But grand strategies are difficult to devise and are infrequently formulated in an essentially pragmatic nation which has historically preferred to take one step at a time while leaving open the longer range options. Moreover, grand strategies are all the more difficult

to formulate and implement in a period of substantial upheaval and flux on the national and international scenes.

Therefore, another kind of logic would suggest that the first question above should come first in answering the whole set of questions: How to recruit the Armed Forces? But this issue requires a much more complicated analysis than it usually receives.

In general, there are three basic ways to recruit people to serve in the Armed Forces: (1) a conscription system; (2) a volunteer system; (3) as part of a universal service system. In actual practice, conscription systems and volunteer systems can be mixed in various ways. A universal service system is in one sense only a special category of a conscription system, although the universal service system to be described here will differ significantly from most similar proposals offered at earlier times in the United States.

Various combinations of incentives and inducements have historically been used with all three of the general approaches outlined here. Conscription, as the term is used in this essay, is meant to include all forms of forced service—for example, impressment and enslavement—when the force derives from the power of the Government which is raising the military services. Conscription of whatever form has typically been used whenever no combination of incentives and inducements was adequate to raise the number and kinds of military services which the Government thought was needed.

Conscription has been the basic system used by the U.S. Government since the passage of the Selective Service Act of 1940, although supplemented by some aspects of a volunteer system. Indeed, various versions of a conscription system have always been used in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The conscription system was subjected to increasingly heavy criticism in the United States in the late 1960's not

just from youthful opponents of the Vietnam war, but from many other sectors of American society. Most of the critics focused on the unfairness of the system, with unfairness being measured and assessed on several sets of criteria. As an interim measure, the Nixon administration in 1969 tried to eliminate some of the unfair characteristics of conscription by moving toward a randomized selection procedure. By early 1970, however, the randomized procedures did not appear to be working very effectively in practice, and the administration tried to move ahead toward its true goal of eliminating conscription altogether by means of replacing it with a so-called all-volunteer system.

President Nixon on 27 March 1969, some 2 months after his inauguration, appointed former Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates, Jr., to head a 15-member commission to study the feasibility of an all-volunteer system. The Gates Commission gave the President a favorable report on 20 February 1970, recommending that an all-volunteer system be implemented by 1 July 1971. The Commission based its work on the assumption of a standing force level ranging somewhere between 2 and 3 million men, with an estimate that a full 3 million force level would not cost more than \$4.6 billion per year over what it would cost to maintain the same level through a continuation of the existing Selective Service (i.e., conscription) System. The Commission's report also provided for a backup conscription system to cover emergency contingencies when a standing force level of 3 million men would be inadequate to meet military needs.

The major arguments in favor of an all-volunteer system as offered by Nixon administration officials, by the Gates Commission, and by others who supported the idea generally included the following:

(1) Voluntary armed services is the

basic American tradition except during periods of large-scale war.

(2) The costs of an all-volunteer system would not be nearly as high, on balance, as critics asserted, because significant savings would derive from reduced turnover of personnel, more efficient training, and other features.

(3) Statistics from the Vietnam war showed that draftees suffered far higher combat fatality and injury rates than those who had volunteered for service, suggesting that a conscription system tends to discriminate against draftees and in favor of those who are presumably or potentially professional career military men.

(4) An all-volunteer professional military system would be more efficient than a system relying heavily on frequent infusions of untrained and unenthusiastic draftees.

(5) A conscription system is useful primarily to provide personnel for prolonged wars requiring substantial numbers of ground forces, such as World War II or the Vietnam war, but American involvement in wars of that kind seemed increasingly unlikely in the future.

(6) Higher salary levels and other related inducements under an all-volunteer system would encourage recruits from a broad spectrum of American society, in contrast to the heavy representation from underprivileged minority groups (especially blacks) under the present conscription system.

Critics of the all-volunteer idea tended to rebut all of the arguments enumerated above as well as introducing some further considerations, especially emphasizing the following points:

(1) An all-volunteer system could not be relied on to produce adequate numbers, particularly in high-skill or high-education categories.

(2) The monetary costs of an all-volunteer system would be very high and probably unacceptable politically.

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(3) An all-volunteer system would not be sufficiently flexible to meet a wide spectrum of conceivable contingencies, including even relatively small wars which required ground forces.

(4) An all-volunteer system would be composed largely of people from low-income white and minority group backgrounds with limited skills and inferior preentry education, because those with better educations from more comfortable sectors of the society would see more attractive futures for themselves in nonmilitary careers.

(5) An all-volunteer system would result in an estrangement of the armed services from the broader civilian society, and this would pose serious potential problems of civilian control over the military.

(6) The all-volunteer concept would undermine the traditional importance of patriotism and the duty of every citizen to assume, or to be willing to assume, his share of the burden in protecting a free democratic society.

A simple listing of the pro and con arguments on the issue of an all-volunteer system, however, was not an adequate description of the political reaction to this idea as of the spring of 1970. Although President Nixon himself had given many indications that he strongly favored the all-volunteer concept, the Nixon administration had not formally submitted a proposal to the Congress which embodied this concept. And although several Senators and Representatives had introduced bills which embodied the concept, the general sentiment in Congress as a whole seemed to be strongly skeptical toward the all-volunteer idea. As for the Department of Defense, obviously the agency of Government on which the impact of an all-volunteer system would be most directly felt, it was clear that the Secretary of Defense and the uniformed leaders in the Pentagon did not want to mount an open attack on an idea which they knew to be favored by their

Commander in Chief. But it was equally clear that these military leaders maintained many strong reservations concerning the all-volunteer idea.

In summary, the political climate in Washington in the spring of 1970 was highly uncertain with respect to future national policy on techniques for generating personnel for the Armed Forces. Nobody really liked the existing conscription system, and yet the weight of opinion in Congress and the Pentagon was clearly fearful of a radical abandonment of the system. The President and his Gates Commission clearly wanted a radical abandonment of conscription in order to replace it with an all-volunteer system, and yet the President appeared reluctant to campaign for the all-volunteer concept in view of congressional and Defense Department opposition. Typically, the interim result during this kind of uncertain situation in Washington was that everybody claimed to be giving the matter "further study."

A period of further study is perhaps therefore not a bad time to introduce a third possibility for consideration. This is the idea of a "universal service" system. There is some evidence that this kind of idea is already getting some attention from Pentagon thinkers,<sup>2</sup> but the evidence is thin.

Anyone who introduces a third possibility is implying strong reservations about the other two alternatives: either a continuation of conscription, or the all-volunteer concept. This writer would prefer to make these reservations explicit. The conscription system as it evolved over the 30 years following the passage of the Selective Service Act of 1940 was manifestly unfair on a great many grounds. It resulted in serious social, political, and economic inequities. It was costly, inefficient, and discredited in the eyes of many Americans, including President Nixon as the leader of the Republican Party and many leaders of the Democratic Party. In view of all of the published criticisms of this

scription system, most of which are concurred in by this writer, nothing further needs to be added here on this point.

However, this writer also generally shares in most (although not all) of the criticisms of the all-volunteer concept. It was this dissatisfaction with conscription but also with the all-volunteer idea which led to the search for a third possibility: the "universal service" idea.

One way to approach the case for a universal service system is to offer three further considerations which have received little, if any, attention in the discussions of the all-volunteer concept.

The first of these three neglected considerations is the requirement for a periodic and comprehensive national manpower needs survey, as the basis for a comprehensive national manpower policy. The work of the Gates Commission or any other study which confines itself to the manpower needs of the Armed Forces is seriously guilty of a piecemeal approach, creating more problems than it will solve. There is ample evidence that the draft has been a primary factor, perhaps even the overriding factor, in the major career decisions of most young American men in recent years, extending back well before the Vietnam war. To offer only one example, Vice Adm. William P. Mack, U.S. Navy, reported that a recent survey of motivations for joining the Naval Reserve showed that "more than 75 percent of enlisted personnel serving their initial obligation indicated a draft related reason for their initial entry into the Reserve."<sup>3</sup> Generalizing from Admiral Mack's report and other evidence, it is clear that most young men with no previous military experience who have joined Reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces in recent years have been "draft dodgers." But this is not the only kind of decision which young men have made as a result of considerations of the draft. They have similarly made major decisions on career fields, on marriage,

and on other important issues as a consequence of this consideration.

The consideration of a potential or actual military service requirement, however, is by no means the only important factor taken into account by young people in making major lifetime and career commitments. Another set of factors relates to the apparent demands for people in various professional and vocational fields. From time to time newspapers and magazines publish charts and reports showing the need for people in various fields, and major career decisions are often made on the basis of such evidence. Unfortunately, however, these reports usually lack the authority of a clear-cut long-range national policy, and serious imbalances result. For example, many reports during the period from approximately 1948 to 1950 claimed that the Nation was facing a serious shortage of trained engineers, and many young men elected to pursue engineering studies in their college educations. By about 1953-54, however, new reports indicated a glut of engineers. Similarly in 1969-70, reports indicated a glut of people with Ph.D. degrees in virtually all fields, especially in many scientific and technological and engineering specialties. The glut was obviously a result, in large part, of Federal cutbacks in support for many research activities and for agencies such as NASA. But at the same time, there was a serious reported shortage of trained people in most of the health science fields (not researchers, but practitioners) including medical doctors, nurses, social workers, and the like. By projection, it was also possible to anticipate serious shortages in the mid-1970's of people with appropriate training for dealing with most aspects of the environmental-ecological crisis.

Evidence from almost all of the modern industrialized nations tended to show that, contrary to earlier expectations, the need for many kinds of skilled people tended to grow rather

than to diminish. Germany, for example, was forced in the 1960's to import and train unskilled workers from Spain and Italy to offset shortages of skilled labor in West Germany. Japan in early 1970 even decided to resort to the desperate stratagem of encouraging a growth in the Japanese population as a device for acquiring a larger labor force (although most outside observers saw this as creating more problems than it would solve for Japan).

Therefore, the United States can ill afford to produce more skilled talent than it needs in certain categories, thus wasting some of the Nation's most precious resource, while lacking adequate talent in other categories. More to the point, it cannot continue to let the military draft system or any other system of manpower allocation for the Armed Forces seriously distort the national manpower profile when viewed against overall needs. It is the ultimate in national irrationality to let one single factor, such as a consideration of whether or not a person will be required to perform military service, become a dominating factor in shaping career and educational commitments.

The second of the three considerations generally neglected in debates and discussions on the all-volunteer concept is the fact of youth as a permanent new factor in American politics. The "Madison Avenue people" and others in advertising, marketing, and sales in American business have long understood that young people constitute a powerful consumer market which does not necessarily take its cues and purchasing preferences from other consumer sectors. This as well as other considerations should have, but did not, lead perceptive policymakers to understand that young people in the approximate age group from 16 to 25 increasingly constituted a formidable political grouping—indeed, a political grouping with its own techniques for internal communication and for certain kinds of group action

ranging not only across the Nation, but across international boundaries. It would be a serious mistake to think that all youth are accurately represented by the more vocal dissenters and political radicals who began to receive such great publicity in the mid-1960's. But it would be an even greater mistake to think that the younger generation will ever again revert to the docile and inert behavior of earlier young people who were generally content to accept the values and goals of their elders as immutable givens. The new political fact of life has gained increasing recognition in the spreading effort to lower the minimum national voting age to 18. But the new political fact of life has not yet gained recognition in the form of an awareness of the necessity for a comprehensive national youth policy.

Therefore, any proposal for satisfying the manpower needs of the Armed Forces which is not part of a comprehensive youth policy as well as part of a national comprehensive manpower policy is certain to create many more problems than it will solve. Moreover, it is clear that a comprehensive youth policy must be intimately related to a comprehensive manpower policy, because youth constitutes the fundamental input ingredient of the national manpower pool, and also because youthful career decisions are a major determining factor in shaping the national manpower profile for years to come.

One key element in a national youth policy would be the national manpower needs survey suggested earlier in this essay. Whether this survey should be assigned to the Bureau of Labor Statistics or to the Census Bureau or to some other agency of Government is not as important as the requirement that it be taken at frequent intervals, preferably once a year, because the forecasting of manpower needs is not yet an infallible science. The needs change over shorter and shorter cycles as new national poli-

cies emerge to cope with unforeseen problems in the rapidly evolving circumstances of a modern industrial society.

Beyond this, however, a viable national youth policy must meet several other conditions. First, representatives of the younger generation must be incorporated in the decisionmaking process which sets the policy, in order to help create a consensus within the younger generation in support of the policy. Second, the policy must offer stronger kinds of guarantees that the Nation commits itself to allow a man to practice his profession or vocation at the same time that the man makes his commitment to the profession or vocation, because: (1) substantial numbers of educated and skilled people who suddenly find themselves out of work because of shifting national policies constitute a serious and indeed intolerable national waste; (2) these unemployed people contribute to a sense of social drift, disorder, and malaise which either paralyzes national will and resolve or which encourages a variety of ill-considered radical solutions; (3) a viable youth policy must allow and encourage sounder foundations for educational and career commitments in the first place, but also opportunities for reconsideration and recommitment in new directions at some later time; (4) the youth policy must offer a viable variety of options in terms of young people's own perceptions of this Nation and the global society of which it is a part, as well as in terms of their values and goals.

In short, it is now too late in the history of the American society to think that critical manpower needs can be adequately met by a continuation of the unsystematic and impressionistic procedures used by most young people to decide what to study in college, whether and what to study in postgraduate education, and what professional or vocational careers to enter. They need more hard evidence on which to make

their decisions, more assurance that the society supports them in those decisions, but also more opportunities to redecide in a new direction if an early decision proved unattractive.

Social costs are attached to all decisions, and social costs can be translated into economic costs. Calculations of this kind must also be a part of any effort to combine a comprehensive manpower policy with a comprehensive youth policy. One can start with the obvious observation that merely the process of being born, growing up, and receiving a basic education in any society, from birth to perhaps age 18, will give a person a certain set of general attitudes, values, behavioral patterns, and skills. But this set is seldom identical to the ideal preentry requirements for any particular profession or vocation. However, in order to minimize costs (social costs as well as immediate economic costs), most professional and vocational groups will try to recruit their new members usually from among those in the 18-22 age bracket who already appear to have the maximum preentry attitudes, values, education, skills, et cetera, and then to give the recruits further education and training and socialization experiences to offset the gap between the actual and the ideal. The costs (all kinds of costs) to a society for producing members of a professional or vocational group which the society desires to have will vary directly upward with the extent to which the society fails to produce the desired number of potential recruits at the threshold of adulthood who already possess the basic requirements for admission to the group as determined by a consensus between the society and the group.

Let us take a hypothetical example. Suppose that a society wants to maintain a medical profession and that the members of this profession must be generally recruited from the ranks of the overall society. Suppose that this society at large as well as those who are



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already members of the existing medical profession tend to agree that the new medical recruits should have at least the following characteristics: (1) above-average intelligence, (2) a college-level education with some emphasis on subjects relevant to technical medical skills, (3) habits of personal cleanliness, (4) a commitment to improve the health of all peoples even at some sacrifice to the potential medical doctor's personal convenience. But then, to put it in the extreme, suppose that the society suddenly produces no candidates for recruitment to the medical profession who possess these characteristics. The society will then be forced either to accept lower standards of medical care, perhaps no medical care at all, or to pay a price for meeting the standards. The price it is willing to pay, expressed in the terms of an economist, will be a reflection of its marginal propensity to consume medical care in contrast to its marginal propensity to consume other goods and services. A different angle on this hypothetical situation could be suggested by an analogy between the society which wants to produce medical doctors and the business firm which manufactures a product. If the firm is faced with a steady deterioration in the quality of the raw material which it uses to make the product, the costs of remaining in production will increase, or the quality of the product will suffer, or both. It could even become necessary to go out of business.

These considerations can be easily demonstrated on the following simple chart. Obviously, A and B and C are the same on both lists, therefore, the costs to the society will be the costs first of persuading the desired number of people to enter the proposed vocational or professional field and then the costs of converting D to X and E to Y through education, training, and socialization experiences on the job at the apprentice stage.

**Actual Characteristics  
of Typical Preentry Recruit  
to a Vocation or a Professional Field**

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E

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**Ideal Characteristics  
of Desired Preentry Recruit  
to a Vocation or a Professional Field**

- A
- B
- C
- X
- Y

This raises the third of the three neglected considerations in debates and discussions on the concept of an all-volunteer Military Establishment. The simple fact of the matter is that the term "volunteer" is a gross misnomer. Do we speak in terms of having an all-volunteer force of auto mechanics or an all-volunteer group of grocery store managers or an all-volunteer medical profession in the United States? Obviously not. In actuality the so-called all-volunteer concept is an all-vocational or all-professional concept, depending on whether one regards a military career as a vocation or a profession (or perhaps mixing elements of both). When people decide whether to enter the military as a career or medicine as a career or any other career choice, they are, in fact, weighing incentives against costs (again, many kinds of costs and not merely simple direct economic costs). This kind of decision is something quite different from the traditional definition of the verb "to volunteer," which usually meant a temporary short-range commitment to serve for a brief period *away from* one's primary career commitment.

Therefore, the kind of combined comprehensive national manpower policy and comprehensive youth policy proposed here should make these career choices much clearer than they have ever been before. It is probably fair to

say that very few if any young people who make career decisions in the United States have more than the foggiest notion of what daily life is actually like in their chosen fields, under the unsystematic and impressionistic procedures which have traditionally governed such decisions. Even older men who complete or retire from an early career and then decide on a second career are frequently operating under erroneous impressions. The unavailability of adequate information on incentives, inducements, and various kinds of costs not only at the time of initial entry but at stages in a career, as well as requirements in personal life styles, requirements for periodic advanced education and training, and daily stresses and strains, may well account for the allegedly great number of people who regard themselves as misplaced in their chosen vocations or professions. The personal as well as the overall social costs which are attached to this sense of misplacement are undoubtedly staggering.

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It is now appropriate to suggest some of the mechanics of the "universal service" system proposed here. First, it would embrace every single young American on graduation from a secondary or high school or, for those not graduating, at age 18. To answer the first obvious question, it would include females as well as males. To answer the second obvious question, it would tend to embrace the entire national population in the 18-to-20 age bracket, and this is a population of approximately 10.5 million people as calculated by the Gallup organization.<sup>4</sup> Exemptions would be granted in only the most severe situations, for example, as in the case of serious protracted illness or in the case of a grave family hardship. Even those young people with physical handicaps could and should be

accommodated in some of the conceivable kinds of programs within the scope of the USS idea as proposed here.

The Universal Service System, or USS, would embrace a number of corps, perhaps including a list which would resemble the following:

(1) Military corps (for assignment, as needed and appropriate, to the several armed services),

(2) International development corps (embracing work projects such as have heretofore been performed by some Peace Corps groups),

(3) International teaching corps (embracing teaching duties such as have heretofore been performed by some Peace Corps groups),

(4) Urban services corps (embracing work projects, teaching, and other activities in urban areas such as have heretofore been performed by some VISTA groups),

(5) Rural services corps (embracing work projects, teaching, and other activities in rural regions such as have heretofore been performed by some VISTA groups),

(6) Technical skills corps (embracing teaching and learning activities such as have heretofore been conducted within various Federal programs designed to train the hard-core unemployed),

(7) Environmental services corps (embracing a wide variety of conceivable work, teaching, and learning projects, as proposed in a statement by Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel on 5 March 1970).

This listing of possible corps is not necessarily the best way to structure the organizational components of a USS program nor necessarily an exhaustive list of the tasks and services on the national agenda. However, it does suggest that the agenda is of far greater magnitude than most people have yet realized. In reply or rebuttal to the possible objection—How would the Nation ever be able to manage and get useful work from a USS program in-

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volving at least 10.5 million young people between about ages 18 and 20 (and this figure would gradually rise as the overall national population increased)?—the response is simply that even this number of people would not be adequate to the staggering needs.

A related question is the management of the overall USS program. The first step would be to abolish the Selective Service System as it has existed and replace it with a new governing agency which would include representation not just from the Department of Defense, but from most other Cabinet-level agencies as well, plus the U.S. Civil Service Commission and other governmental departments and agencies. The new governing agency should also include direct representation of other sectors of the society at large, most especially including representation from the critical 18-to-20 age bracket.

The new governing agency would receive quotas to be filled from agencies such as the Department of Defense, with its needs for manpower for the Armed Forces. The new governing agency, in consultation with appropriate departments and agencies, would determine quotas for other corps.

The new governing agency could "contract" not only with relevant Government departments, but with private groups such as business organizations, labor unions, universities, and colleges to assume some of the managerial and/or training functions. For one example, housing is a major national problem, and part of this problem is a result of many structurally sound apartments and dwellings which have fallen into disrepair and have been abandoned by their owners in most large cities. Let us suppose that it was determined that 500,000 young people, if given not more than 90 days of training in such basic skills as painting and carpentry, could be utilized with great effectiveness in helping to restore these housing units. The new USS governing body

could devise a program, in cooperation with the Departments of HUD and Labor, and then actually contract with appropriate labor unions or repair companies to take specified numbers of young people, train them for not more than 90 days, and then use them (i.e., manage and direct them) on work projects.

A major feature of the program as proposed here is that young people would be given a meaningful choice. Indeed, choices could be specified by major corps programs and by subprograms within the corps. Each young person on attaining the age of 17 could register his or her choice on a card form and submit this to the central office of the USS governing body. By means of a computer, these choices could be matched against quotas for each corps program or subprogram. In cases where more than the allowed quota indicated a particular choice, the final selection could be made on a computer-randomized basis from among all qualified candidates. Of course, certain people would be disqualified for certain corps programs or subprograms on the basis of—for example—physical requirements. A paraplegic would be obviously disqualified from service in the infantry but might be well qualified for many other programs. In any event, the computer selection procedure would give each young person in the program his or her highest choice, consistent with quotas in each corps program or subprogram and consistent with the minimal preentry requirements and qualifications.

All available evidence would suggest that the overwhelming majority of young people would prefer nonmilitary over military programs.<sup>5</sup> Differential incentives and inducements would need to be devised to cope with this problem. For example, the required period of service in the military corps could be set at 18 months, while the required period in the other corps programs could be set

at 24 to 36 months. Similarly, post-service benefits could be set according to a differential scale. For example, something like the "GI Bill" benefits could be devised, with 2 to 4 years of postservice education or vocational training for those who served in the military but only half that much for those who served in the nonmilitary corps. Special benefits could be included for those involved in extremely hazardous or potentially hazardous work, such as combat situations for those in the military and those who perhaps volunteered for a civilian-type corps which exposed them to serious diseases.

The USS idea could easily be made to serve other important social purposes. For example, it has been widely publicized that most universities and colleges in the Nation are facing dire financial problems, and this includes even the most prominent and well-endowed institutions. It has therefore been widely predicted that vast Federal support will be required to keep most of these institutions in existence, even if important and perhaps money-saving reforms are achieved in the operations and structures of these schools. But it has also been predicted that the good of the society will require that many more young people receive some form of postsecondary school education, in most cases similar to the kinds now offered by colleges and universities. The USS program could support the great resource represented by the Nation's colleges and universities, as well as enhancing the even greater resource represented by its young people, if a Federal subsidy to higher education were to be created by means of something like a "GI Bill" with liberal postservice educational benefits including tuition support, no-interest loans for further education after the expiration of tuition support, et cetera. This would be an investment in the future of the society as well as a benefit

in exchange for services rendered. It is clearly only a matter of time before 2 to 4 years of posthigh school education or training are as ordinary and routine in the United States as high school education is today. The pressing need to accelerate this process could be met by adding to the USS idea the suggested features resembling the old World War II and Korean war "GI Bill" benefits.

This is not the place to try to spell out all of the possibilities and refinements which could be made a part of the USS concept. But, to suggest one other conceivable inducement, people could be allowed to pair themselves, when submitting their preferences, for all corps programs and subprograms where various kinds of pairings would be appropriate. For example, husband-and-wife teams could be paired, but so also could—for example—two high school boys who were close friends and who would find military service more appealing if they knew they could serve together. Provisions of this kind have existed in the past for twins or brothers and could be extended to include many more kinds of appropriate paired-service situations. As for husband-and-wife teams, it could probably be expected that one result of the USS program would be a sharp decline in preservice or during-service marriages.

This is also not the place to try to reply to all of the anticipated objections to the USS idea, but one major objection should be dealt with at least briefly, and this is the claim of overwhelming monetary costs. One response is that substantial administrative savings would be achieved, in contrast to the Selective Service System, simply because of the everybody-serves feature. "Selection" is one of the costliest aspects of "Selective Service." For certain, there would be high starting-up costs and other expensive "bugs" to remove from the system in early years. But there are other ways of reckoning costs. For example, it should be noted

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that the USS concept as embraced here would include many activities already being undertaken in a variety of piecemeal Federal programs, and some economies of scale should be realized by comprehensive centralized management. Finally, it is possible and indeed desirable to reckon costs not in comparison to what is already being done, but in comparison to the costs of not trying to do the things suggested by a program. The basic argument here is that a continuation of hastily improvised, piecemeal, and scattergun Federal programs which fail to match activities against a long agenda of urgent social needs and which fail to think in terms of a combined comprehensive manpower policy and youth policy will ultimately cost far more than whatever the USS idea would cost.

The basic obstacles to the "Universal Service System" idea, however, are not the objections that could be expected from many individuals and agencies and organizations which would have to make major adjustments to it nor the objections that could be expected from executive and legislative branch leaders who are not notably enthusiastic for bold new ideas regardless of the cost factor. Even if all relevant agencies and organizations should rally to the USS idea and even if the Congress should enact it and the President should fully support it, the USS would still face two fundamental obstacles in the path of successful implementation.

The first of these obstacles is the general and spreading sense of social disorder and upheaval that increasingly characterized American society in early 1970. As stated on the first page of this essay, it appeared at times that the very fabric of American society was beginning to unravel, and a mood of national drift, if not paralysis, was evident in many quarters. The situation was well described by James Reston:

In his well-publicized memorandum to the President, Daniel Patrick Moynihan said: "In one form or another, all of the major problems facing you derive from the erosion of the authority of the institutions of American society. . . . All we know is that the sense of institutions being legitimate—especially the institutions of government—is the glue that holds societies together. When it weakens, things come unstuck."

Well, they are unstuck now.<sup>6</sup>

Most Americans probably preferred not to look at the disturbing facts, but the evidence was impossible to ignore. Three prominent leftwing student radical leaders appeared on channel 13 television in New York City on the evening of 23 March 1970 and said that American laws rarely punish the "rich" while dealing harshly with the "poor." The Federal Government during that same week, as if determined to support the leftwing case, moved at glacial speed on the possibility of prosecuting the major oil company responsible for the massive oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico which was causing millions of dollars in damage and cleanup costs, although the Interior Department said that the oil company was in violation of several hundred Federal regulations. Major newspapers generally reported the story as if the oil company was merely the unfortunate victim of an accident rather than possibly guilty of criminal behavior. Other things happened during that same week. Postal workers felt compelled to resort to an illegal strike in order to improve their poverty-level wages while the President and Congress treated the problem as a political football. The environmental crisis deepened as major cities around the Nation reported no foreseeable solution on the problem of the disposal of daily

garbage, trash and sewage. The administration in Washington conveyed the impression of diminishing enthusiasm for improvements in the condition of minority groups, especially blacks, while the frustrations of some of these groups were leading to scattered urban-style guerrilla warfare. In short, the United States appeared to have lost both the will and the ability to cope with major crisis-proportion problems. The ultimate crisis, therefore, was a crisis of confidence and self-confidence.

Consequently, the second major obstacle facing the successful implementation of a "Universal Service System" concept was the way in which the national crisis of confidence expressed itself among young people in the 16-to-25 age bracket. The leftwing radicals openly proposed a violent social revolution (for example, on the channel 13 television presentation referred to above), but the leftwing radicals were only a tiny minority. On the other hand, most successful revolutions have been led by tiny minorities when vast majorities were demoralized and suffered from a paralysis of will. Substantial evidence indicated that many, if not most, young people did suffer from serious demoralization. The evidence included the widespread and growing narcotics problem among young people in large cities but also in small towns across the Nation, as reported in most major newspapers and news magazines. The evidence also included a comprehensive scientific study of suicides among college students.<sup>7</sup> This report indicated that, contrary to the belief that most college suicide cases were brilliant neurotic students often on drugs, in fact, most of these cases were fairly average students. Escape through drugs or suicide is not generally characteristic of people who self-confidently face the future with some optimism that major problems can be solved.

The basic term in the "Universal Service System" concept is the word

*service*, but people do not respond to the idea of service unless they have some degree of confidence in the social system which calls for their service. Some social systems were and are capable of instilling this. The Mormon Church, for example, successfully requires several years of service from all of its young people, and the Israeli Government successfully requires military service from all (male and female) of its young people. For the United States as a Nation to be able successfully to implement a program of universal service, however, many things would have to contribute to a restoration of confidence in the American social system on the part of young people and on the part of Americans as a whole. It should be emphasized that the word "military" does not appear in the term "Universal Service System" as proposed here; it is certainly not the same as the "Universal Military Training" or UMT idea which was proposed after World War II. Nor does the word "national" appear in the term "Universal Service System" here, because most young people want to be able to identify their Nation with the broader cause of humanity in general.

The USS proposal would allow this identification between the national interests and the broader interests of mankind. It would help to heal the rift between young people who prefer military forms of service and those who prefer nonmilitary forms. It would offer a wide variety of options as to particular forms of service without any kind of discrimination beyond minimal skill and physical qualifications in certain categories. It would not even suggest invidious distinctions between those who spent their period of required service primarily as learners and those who served primarily as teachers. In other words, the young person from an underprivileged background who spent his required years in learning a skill or acquiring remedial education would be viewed as serving the society just as

much as the young person who was assigned a teaching role.

Basic pay would be the same for all and would be very low. While young people from more affluent backgrounds would thus suffer some loss in their standards of living while spending their required service, this would be a basic democratizing experience not wholly unlike that acquired by the millions who served in the Armed Forces in the general mobilization of World War II.

The USS idea would give every young person a break of approximately 2 years between high school and college or high school and other forms of later education, in contrast to the present system in which most young people never experience anything beyond a classroom or school situation between the ages of 6 and 22 when they are expected to reach major career decisions and commitments. The USS idea would thus allow at least this one significant nonclassroom experience on which to base these major career decisions. Further, if the USS proposal could be combined with the kind of comprehensive manpower policy and program called for earlier in this essay, it would represent a national commitment of important kinds of support for young people entering the adult economy.

In conclusion, the USS idea is complicated. It poses some problems, and it would face many expected obstacles. Appropriate administrative arrangements would not be easy to formulate and implement. Most seriously, it could not work unless it was accompanied by a general restoration of American con-

fidence in national abilities and purposes. Yet, the USS proposal itself could make a substantial contribution to this restoration of confidence if it was part of a larger set of activities and programs at all levels of government and in the private sector of the American social order. On balance, it appears to this writer to be the one best way to recruit young Americans for the massive agenda of military and nonmilitary needs now urgently experienced by the United States and to help once again to instill the idea of service to the American society within the broader context of service to humanity. The USS proposal, if implemented, would result in many kinds of costs, but the conviction here is that the costs of not doing it are likely to be far greater than the costs of giving it an honest try.

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#### BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Dr. Vincent Davis holds a doctorate from Princeton University in political science and is presently serving in the Nimitz Chair of Political Science at the Naval War College. He has taught at both

Dartmouth College and the University of Denver and has served as a consultant to the White House offices, the Department of Defense offices, and several other Government agencies. Dr. Davis has published several books dealing with national security matters and a variety of reports and articles. He is a commander in the Naval Reserve and comes to the War College from Princeton's Center of International Studies.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. For a good history of military conscription as it has been used in the United States, beginning with and since the colonial period, see Gary L. Wamsley, *Selective Service and a Changing America* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1969), ch. 2.

2. See Secretary of Defense Laird's remarks as noted in the final two paragraphs of article "Laird Says Volunteer Plan Would Cut Forces a Third," *The New York Times*, 30 January 1970, p. 16:2.

3. William P. Mack, "Reserves of Tomorrow: One View from the Top," *The Naval Reservist*, February 1970, p. 15.

4. For further details on the educational mix of this population group and how this group is presently employed, see the chart on p. 2 of sec. 4, "Profile of the 10 Through 20-Year-Old Potential Voter," *The New York Times*, 15 March 1970. Note, however, that the indicated figure of 60,000 with less than 9 years of formal schooling was corrected to the accurate figure of 600,000.

5. For one philosophical commentary on this matter, see the essay by Arthur N. Gilbert, "Some Reflections on the Future of War," *The Denver [University] Quarterly*, Fall 1969.

6. James Reston, "The Forgotten Principle," *The New York Times*, 25 March 1970, p. 46:3.

7. See "College Suicide Study Discounts Impact of Drugs and Pressures," *The New York Times*, 23 March 1970, p. 1:1.

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Cease to hire your armies. Go yourselves, every man of you,  
and stand in the ranks.

*Demosthenes: Third Philippic, 341 B.C.*



