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Why Not Draft the Next Congress?

By James Bovard

BLACKSBURG, Va. — The All-Volunteer Congress has proved to be a failure. Its cost is extremely high and there is not a proportional representation of minorities. There are also many doubts about the honesty and intelligence of the recent volunteers. Many of Congress's recent failures are owing to the low quality of its composition.

A change is needed. The country can no longer afford the high costs of the volunteer system, nor can it tolerate the low level of performance and reliability. Conscription appears to be the only way to get a decent Congress at an affordable price.

The current Congressional system has demonstrated its inability to deal with crises.

The energy crisis has been endangering our economy and national security since 1973, yet Congress has been incapable of launching a coherent and effective counteroffensive. Any system that fails like this cannot continue except to the detriment of the nation.

With national security problems, inflation, and the specter of a recession, we cannot afford the luxury of a mercenary set of lawmakers.

No one has been willing to defend the intelligence of the current set of volunteers. The fact that this group

has not been able to balance its income and expenditures for 10 years straight shows a marked deficiency.

In a society with 50 percent women and over 10 percent black and Hispanic populations, these groups are very underrepresented in Congress. When we consider the injustice of these statistics, superficial objections against conscription are easily swept away.

A viable democracy needs to have a racially, sexually balanced set of representatives. The latest statistics issued last November proved that this lack of representation is worsening.

It is only the ego-starved who volunteer for Congressional duty now. These people are forced into Congress by their psychological or mental poverty, as no real alternative or treatment exists for their condition. Naturally, Congress is psychologically off-balance, because of the nature of the people who currently volunteer.

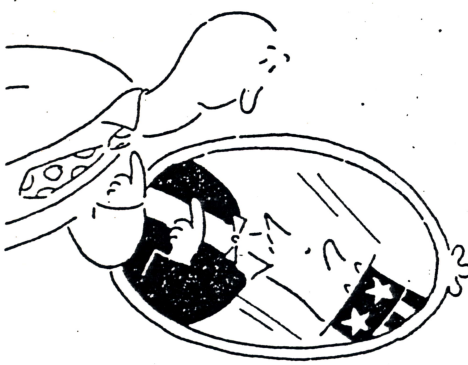
Most of the members of Congress are between 30 and 60 years of age. There is no group that enjoys the benefits of society more than this group. They have the highest salaries, the nicest homes, the largest cars, and the most power. However, this group is deeply entrenched in hedonism, and has thus far turned a deaf ear to the needs of the country.

Something is needed to restore the sense of honor, duty, service, and

patriotism to the middle-aged.

With a service-oriented Congress, every man and woman would be required to register with the Selective Service Commission on their 30th birthday.

Every second year, everyone's name would be placed in a giant



basket, and the Secretary of Labor would pull out the number of names needed for that session of Congress.

The new members would receive a subsistence allowance (an honorable precedent established during the Revolutionary War), as it would not be right to overpay someone for what he owed to society.

The moral caliber of Congress would be improved by conscription. The environmental and personal background of many of today's volunteers appears to be conducive to fabrication. Randomly picking people off the street would give a much higher level of honesty and responsibility.

Some people object to the idea of conscription in itself. But, rather than being a moral evil, Congressional conscription should be seen as giving an opportunity for service to the middle-aged.

The draftees would have the chance to serve their country and be a part of an important process, and would also learn a lot in the process. The educational benefits alone could justify Congressional conscription, as it is well known that many middle-aged people lack intellectual stimulation or the opportunity to increase their knowledge.

Granted, it would be easy to just let the system go on as it is, hoping that it doesn't totally break down tomorrow. But, can we allow our national interest to be determined by an overpaid, racially unbalanced, and psychologically unstable pack of volunteers? Our national interest can only be served by a balanced selection of people from all parts of society.

James Bovard is a writer currently in exile in the Appalachian Mountains.

Friends in San Francisco argued uneasily about whether McCarthyism was dead or only lying low. And government-wise people in Washington raved over the list of presidential hopefuls — not for the best candidate, they said, but for the least vexing.

In Vermont, we visited a jolly baker on a little farm that was set like a pearl in the lush green mountains. When I asked His Jolliness what he had done before, he replied: "Just a

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figure out — and the number of people who can offer cogent analyses and solutions seems to have diminished in inverse proportion to the square of the number (if not to the number of the squares) who have been aroused to concern for national and international issues.

Why should a country, where production and educational opportunity continue to expand, show signs of terminal decay, like pernicious infla-

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is it so hard to nail down the causes and the solution — or even the extent — of the energy crisis?

Why is it that there are so many more open-minded, unbiased people today, but the broad minds often find themselves unable or unwilling to zero in on a practical problem?

Why are there so many people who say they have everything — except for that overriding joy of living, of building, of creating, of belonging, of being

patriotism to the middle-aged. With a service-oriented Congress, every man and woman would be required to register with the Selective Service Commission on their 30th birthday.

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On balance, this country has moved ahead over these three and a half decades. And where in the world don't they have problems? You can hear roosters crowing all over this land of ours. The only question is how to make it on into another dawn.

Sidney Rittenberg, who returned home last March after living in China since the 1940's, is working on a book about China.

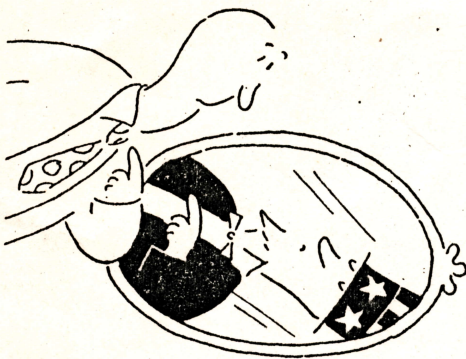
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Unhappily, some unduly apologetic interest. They show Most American people are a good deal better than Northern Ireland counterparts.

In Zimbabwe R somewhat different legislators are tall different from the Britain over the y the bases on whi grabbed independent abandoned. Ian Sm any rate the idea rule, has admitted nearly 14 years of and, more importa lives of thousands o the attempt. It is that no African cou a government that But it would be progress has been disfigured the rec have been, they advance on the outorship that went mean, as Senator would argue, that t has brought about should now be endu sion seems very i Surely nobody will that Mr. Smith wo Bishop Muzorewa Robert Mugabe.

It might be safer, keeping with princ the tactics that i tortuous years, b within sight of a sett This is the wrong any British person Americans. But ough not to be dil Rhodesia, and cou being up on Norr British seem to nee own mistakes abou so. Keep it up.

Christopher Hitchman The New Statesman

James Reston is on