



REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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MANPOWER LEGISLATION FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE

An aspect of national policy that merits careful thought by all segments of the American population is the impending need for new manpower legislation. Universal military training has in the past been rather consistently opposed by religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and its supporting conventions.

Various groups and offices have been working for many months on the preparation of proposals for the 84th Congress. Speeches by leaders, from the President on down, have indicated that new manpower legislation will have high priority in the legislative program of the 84th Congress. The present Selective Service law expires in June, 1955, so Congress must make plans for the future.

The opposition to universal military training has been so strong in years past that it seems probable now that any new legislation will avoid that terminology. No one is particularly anxious about the name "Universal Military Training" but the theory and practice are earnestly sought by many.

Major Proposals

In a November 26, 1954 survey of the proposals now being hammered out, the Congressional Quarterly described a baker's half-dozen as follows:

"American Legion officials propose a six-year extension of the present draft law. They propose that the new military training program include a basic period of not less than 1,000 hours which, they say, could be given in 17 weeks. The Legion currently envisages compulsory reserve duty in combat-ready units for all 1,000-hour trainees. If a trainee failed to keep up his reserve participation, he would be liable to re-induction for two years. The Legion also wants a civilian group to formulate overall policy.

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"Reserve Officers Association recommends a basic training period of six months, divided between military and technical training, for the new military training program. Its officials also feel that compulsory reserve duty should extend only to trainees of this program--not to the two-year veterans. They advocate that, should Congress fail to enact a new UMT-reserve law, present draft legislation be amended to incorporate the compulsory reserve duty principle.

"National Guard Association of the U. S. officials go along with the UMT-compulsory reserve idea. However, they specify that the dual state and federal status of the National Guard and Air National Guard must be preserved. Under this system, membership in the National Guard or Air National Guard can be acquired only by initial membership in a state's Guard.

"Selective Service System -- Maj. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, director of the System, has urged that in order to build a stronger reserve, new methods be adopted to encourage both non-commissioned officers and privates to remain in service. Service officials are not concerned with the UMT phase of any new legislation. They have indicated that they would be satisfied with an amendment to present law to provide for compulsory reserve duty.

"National Security Training Commission officials propose a new basic training period of six months, plus establishment of a trained non-veterans reserve. They believe the civilian Commission should continue to formulate over-all policy. These officials would retain the present reserve unit system of drilling 48, 24 or 12 times yearly. Under their plan, the amount of time a man spent in the combat-ready reserve would depend on the extent of his drill participation.

"Defense Department -- The new reserve program being whipped into final shape in the Defense Department reportedly would include a six-month UMT training period. Graduates of this course apparently would be transferred to a National Guard or organized reserve unit, and required to attend drills and camps for a period of 7 1/2 years. Two-year draftees would be expected to serve for three years in the callable reserve after which they would go into the standby reserve pool, according to current versions of the program.

"Navy and Air Force officials have long argued for a compulsory reserve made up of trained veterans, rather than 'six-month men.' There has been little tendency within the Department to go along with Legion and Commission demands for a civilian policy group to help administer UMT. Officials hope these differences can be smoothed out by January, 1955."

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When taken together, the several proposals seem to be shaping into a plan which marks out eight years of a young man's life, beginning at age 18, during which he is responsible for national defense. Depending upon needs and quotas for various types of service he would be permitted to choose between two programs. Either he would go into the Selective Service for a two-year period of training after which he would pass first into a callable reserve and later into standby reserve for another period of six years, more or less; or he would go into a kind of UMT program for six months of basic training and then into the callable reserve, and later into the standby reserve, for a total of eight years. Weekly drill and summer camps would be required of the callable reserve, at least.

The Public Response

Obviously, a great deal of ironing remains to be done before a firm proposal goes to the Hill. Furthermore, the public acceptance of such a proposal is difficult to predict in the loaded atmosphere of today's tensions.

In 1951 the major pressure groups divided on the issue. Labor, farm, school, and church groups generally were against UMT, while most organizations representing veterans, business, women and lawyers were for it. A Congressional Quarterly compilation made after the 1951 controversy showed the following lineup:

For UMT

American Coalition
Natl. Security Committee
American Legion
VFW
Amvets
Reserve Officers Assn.
Natl. Guard Assn. of the
U. S.
Blinded Veterans Assn.
General Fedn. of Women's
Clubs
Natl. Fedn. of Business
and Professional
Women's Clubs
Chamber of Commerce of
the U. S.
Conference of American
Small Business
American Council of
Christian Churches
United Textile Workers
of America (AFL)
American Bar Assn.

Against UMT

Natl. Council Against
Conscription
CIO
AFL
Internatl. Assn. of Machinists
Natl. Grange
Natl. Farmers Union
American Farm Bureau Fedn.
AVC
Fedl. Council of Churches of
Christ in America
Committees of Methodists,
Baptists, Friends, Mennonites,
Brethren, and other churches
NEA
American Assn. of School
Administrators
Assn. of American Colleges
American Civil Liberties Union
ADA
Socialist Party
Committee for Constitutional
Government

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1955 Positions

The 1955 alignment cannot be predicted in full as yet. However, in addition to the current viewpoints summarized and quoted above, Congressional Quarterly reports the following statements:

"We are in opposition to military conscription in any form...and will carry out an active effort during the next Congress against any legislation advocating the extension of Selective Service or a compulsory reserve." -- Ray Wilson, Washington director, Friends Committee on National Legislation.

"We renew our opposition to all forms of national service legislation." -- James B. Carey, secretary-treasurer, CIO.

"UMT superimposed on the Selective Service System would be inefficient, expensive, and costly in terms of utilization of manpower." -- James G. Patton, president, National Farmers Union.

"Militarism as a way of life is a foe to democracy." -- Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, in a message opposing UMT, adopted in executive session in Chicago Nov. 22."

Points of Argument

When debate gets under way, on and off the Hill, varying pivotal viewpoints will certainly be expressed on:

1. The kind of defense organization which will be effective in the face of modern instruments of war.
2. The effect of a UMT program on our international relations and good will in other countries.
3. The effect of militarization on democracy and the traditional American ideals.
4. The comparative merits for national strength of a greater educational program as contrasted with more military basic training and drill.