

1988

National Service and Religious Values

L. William Yolton

Edward L. Long Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcestgen>

 Part of the [Service Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Yolton, L. William and Long, Edward L. Jr., "National Service and Religious Values" (1988). *Special Topics, General*. Paper 45.
<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcestgen/45>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Topics in Service Learning at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Topics, General by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



MN01108 ✓
5-27-99

National Service and Religious Values

Introduction

The idea of national service covers a range of proposals for organizing young people and, in some cases, senior citizens to do work of national importance to satisfy unmet needs in the society. How people at middle age would be engaged in service is rarely discussed.

The tasks that would be pursued range from conservation work to child care and assistance to the elderly. Supplementation to the education and health care functions in the society is also included. Almost all the needs anticipated are to be met through services requiring a low skill level. Only one proposal aims at developing highly skilled service. The impending shortage of recruits for the armed forces places military manpower as the first priority in the needs many national leaders anticipate satisfying through national service.

The models for administering such proposals range from local, government and private projects of limited size, to a centrally administered federal program. The military service component would, of course, operate as part of the Department of Defense, and some planners anticipate that all participants should be mobilized in a national defense

emergency. Some proposals would be school based and part-time. The incentives for participation range from modest stipends, academic credit, loans and grants for higher education, special training, job readiness, the altruistic motive of service to others, alternative service to the military draft, to the punitive sanctions associated with compulsory military service.

Some think of national service primarily in conjunction with returning to an active draft. Others wish the two ideas to remain distinctly separate from one another.

The concept of national service attracts support from some because it seems based on high ideals and offers apparent solutions to many pressing social problems. The concept creates anxiety among others because they fear the governmental intrusion it could create in matters traditionally left to private discretion or because they doubt that any workable program can be devised.

The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors was founded in 1940 to develop a constructive way to involve conscientious objectors in service to the society as an alternative to military duty under the conscription system. It

coordinated the extensive program for conscientious objectors in the Civilian Public Service camps during World War II. It later provided a job finding service for COs during subsequent periods of the draft that resumed in 1948 and ended in 1973. Its work has support from the major (sometimes called "mainline") religious traditions in America, who seek to defend and extend the rights of the minority of in their own constituency who are called to be conscientious objectors, and also from the many smaller religious bodies (often called peace churches) that have major commitment to civilian service for all their members as an alternative to participation in the military.

The discussion of national service involves momentous value questions—questions that are close to the hearts of all citizens, but especially to religious people. Service is for the sake of cherished values. The discussion of such values and how we shall achieve them cannot be excluded from the debate just because church and state are constitutionally separated. Religious values affect public policies, and religious experience and perspective can inform the deliberative process of a free society.

National Information Center
for Service Learning
1954 Buford Ave, Room R290
St. Paul, MN 55108-6197
1-800-808-SERVE

NSLC
c/o ETR Associates
4 Carbonero Way
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

L. William Yolton & Staff of NISBCO, and Edward L. Long, Jr.

Because of NISBCO's experience with national service, it is very skeptical of the claims about effectiveness by national service proponents. Because of its sensitivity to religious values, it views the pretensions and dangers of national service proposals with genuine fear.

Bane or Blessing?

The current stage of discussion.

National Service has again surfaced as a timely topic for discussion. Nearly a dozen bills about national service and the related issue of the draft were introduced in the 100th Congress. Books and reports about it cover both general considerations and the particulars of local model projects. *Time*, *The New York Times*, and *The Army Times* have discussed the matter in news reports, editorials and "Op-ed" essays. The Democratic Leadership Council endorsed a full scale plan just in time for the Presidential campaign.¹ Senator Sam Nunn says, "It's an idea whose time has come."

After several hearings in the House of Representatives, committee staff are attempting to consolidate the bills into a committee version. (The Senate Armed Services Committee first projected hearings then postponed

them because of other pressing matters in that chamber and committee.) Whatever the case, in the 100th Congress, national service will surely be proposed in the context of pressure for a return to active conscription in the next few years. . . .

The present discussion has been developing for some time; there are few new ideas in it. When, in 1984 Sen. Gary Hart reintroduced the idea of a commission to study national service as one of his "new ideas," it was a retread of the bill by Sen. Paul Tsongas from 1979. That same proposal has been kept alive in current legislation sponsored by Rep. Torricelli.²

The Democratic Leadership Council pronounced favorably on national service in 1986. They had breakfast over it in the spring of 1987 with the supporters of national service programs and proposals. Their March 1988 meeting considered a "working draft" proposal, and a final version, *Citizenship and National Service, A Blueprint for Civic Enterprise*, was published in May of 1988.³ It reflects the ideas of Prof. Charles C. Moskos for civilian service or citizen soldier volunteers, participation as a condition of federally funded education, job and housing benefits. Conservative

Democratic presidential candidates and other politicians have been saying fine words about national service, and some, like Sam Nunn who is the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and also the new chair of DLC, favor a return to the draft. Though national service didn't make it into the platform at the Democratic Convention, it was a platform without specifics.⁴

As if in response to the coercive DLC proposal, Sen. Barbara Mikulski offered a less disruptive plan in July, more on the model of National Guard training and service.⁵ The political winds are favorable.

A number of interested individuals, foundations, and independent organizations have contributed to the current interest.⁶ The Potomac Foundation sponsored a study and published a report of its conference in 1969.⁷ The most recent full report,⁸ 1986, was sponsored by the Ford Foundation, which made still more grants for national service related projects in 1987.⁹ The Moskos study sponsored by the Twentieth Century Fund is due in 1988.¹⁰

A National Association of Service and Conservation Corps was established in 1985, bringing

together the burgeoning state and local programs.¹¹ In the next year, the Youth Policy Institute conducted a conference surveying the issue.¹² The Campus Compact was formed in 1985 to coordinate college and university programs, under the leadership of President Swearer of Brown University. Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, who has a long history of support for national service and of military R.O.T.C., proposed, in 1986, a peace corps version of R.O.T.C.

The longstanding influence of the National Service Secretariat, founded in 1966 under the leadership of Donald J. Eberly, has affected nearly all the legislation about national service since then.¹³ Its first plan was rushed into form to meet the request of the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service (the Marshall Commission) in November 1966. Its consultations and research have helped keep the ideas alive and current. The recurring idea of a national, public corporation to coordinate the programs free of direct political influence is a central idea of Eberly. In 1986 he put together a Coalition on National Service around principles of local initiative, voluntarism, and pluralism. In its 1988 conference at Wingspread, funded by the Johnson Foundation, further consensus was developed among

some of the coalition members to urge an International Volunteer Youth Service with multi-lateral and bi-lateral approaches, and a National Youth Service Foundation with both government and private funding.

More skeptical assessments have been made by the religious communities: The Commission on Voluntary Service and Action held a consultation in 1972.¹⁴ The United Presbyterian Church prepared a study and report in 1973.¹⁵ The Church of the Brethren cooperated with NISBCO in 1972 in a report which was followed up by another in 1979.¹⁶ The American Jewish Committee, however, reported favorably in 1984.¹⁷ NISBCO and the Commission on Voluntary Service and Action sponsored a consultation November 1987, "National Service, Is It for Us?" The consultation did not issue a report, but one group did formulate a statement in opposition to all forms of national service.¹⁸

The basic legislative proposals have circulated for over a decade. . . .

Limited, federally sponsored projects administered by the states were implemented at the end of the seventies. The Job Corps had modest limited success in dealing

with youth unemployment, but it was supplemented by CCC type programs; however, both the Youth Conservation Corps (1971-1982) and the Young Adult Conservation Corps (1977-1982) sputtered to a halt under the Reagan administration. Though the American Conservation Corps, designed to be their successor, sponsored first by Senator Jackson (1971) and again introduced by Rep. John Seiberling, passed the Congress in 1984, it was vetoed by President Reagan. (Rep. Morris K. Udall (D-AZ) has reintroduced the bill, and hearings have been held in the 100th Congress.)

These measures built on the perceived success of the Peace Corps and its off-shoots, such as VISTA which was begun as a "service to the nation" version of the popular overseas corps. They capitalized on the high idealism and sense of national destiny; but, standard notions of the virtues of hard work, earned privileges in the society, and appeals to straightening-out our wayward youth are part of the mix of support from all sides.

All the discussions involve complex variables and intangibles. The factors are operating at different levels of policy and practice, and they combine concrete problems with

untried solutions for unforeseeable results. For instance, the proposals mix ideals of duty to the nation-state with problems of youth unemployment, and the urge to train young people for social responsibility with perceived problems of the ineffectiveness of our educational system.

Much of the discussion turns on whether or not the government will return to active conscription. While the Secretary of Defense has stated a preference for the volunteer army, saying that he prefers those who serve willingly, some military officers, such as the retired head of NATO, General Rogers, have urged a return to the draft. Together with congressional leaders they believe that a draft is necessary to assure force levels in the future, will cost less, and is fairer. The question is debatable. A study by Syllogistics, Inc., shows that there are hidden costs in operating a draft and in training those serving only two years which exceed the costs of a professional/volunteer armed force.¹⁹

The basis of the concern for military manpower is the declining pool of potential recruits. The cohorts of draft age young men will decline until 1993 because of the "dearth of

births." Then the number of young men of draft age begins to rise slowly. By the end of the century the size of the cohort will still not be what it was in 1984, when it slipped below 2,000,000 eighteen year old men. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) claims that the recruiters will have to take one of every two eligible draft age males in 1993 to maintain the authorized force level.²⁰

Another, far less predictable factor will be the state of the civilian economy. If the number of well-paying civilian jobs stays high the potential number of volunteers may shrink. The shortage of available youth is already pushing youth unemployment down and many entry level jobs are well above the minimum wage. If, on the other hand, there is more youth unemployment, the Army may find it easier to recruit, and the incentive of a national service program and draft induced enlistments is less necessary. Economic conscription has always been involved in the labor supply, with the military being the employer of last resort. If, however, unemployment is widespread, national service programs will be part of the relief system, as they were in the Great Depression. The government will also be disposed to increase war preparations as a stimulus to the

economy, and therefore resort to the draft as it did in 1940, and in response to the recession of 1947.

A third factor is the world situation as it affects national security. If nuclear arms reductions are agreed to, but corresponding reductions in conventional forces are not achieved, then pressures for more military personnel will build. The Navy is already in need of more personnel to support a fleet expanding from 450 ships to 600. The same factors will also work to affect the need for national service and the draft. A national emergency stimulates enlistment. Reenlistment of existing personnel and the use of women and civilians in jobs that would have required some of the males reduces the need for compulsion to meet force levels.

The problem of equal burden, "who serves when not all serve," is exacerbated by the spread of conscientious objector sentiment far beyond the "historic peace churches."²¹ The difficulty in determining conscientious objector status for those who would oppose being drafted has also led some policy planners to suggest that having national service as an option in a universal system of conscription, as in West Germany, would reduce the need to have stringent

requirements to qualify as a CO.²² These considerations of fairness led first to shrinking the deferments, then to the abandonment of the draft and to reliance on an all-volunteer armed force at the end of the Vietnam war.

A new factor has emerged since the sixties. State and local government sponsored programs of community service and conservation projects have sprung up and flourished. They add to the voluntary service programs that have operated under church and independent auspices since the missionary movement of the nineteenth century which began educational and social services in both urban and rural areas.

Proposed ideas for National Service, some of them embodied in proposed or soon-to-be proposed legislation, run across the spectrum of ideas. Some of these are only trial balloons, some may have a chance of being made into law.

The particular proposals can be categorized as follows:

1. Incentives for service activity such as subsidy to other programs,
 - subsidy to educational costs in the form of individual loan postponement or forgiveness for voluntary service activity,
 - direct payments to service education programs or participants.
2. Required participation in national service/military service as prerequisite for educational grants and loans, or
 - post-training service requirements for recipients.
3. Direct funding for service programs such as the American Conservation Corps.
4. Universal training and service programs.

A recurring proposal, as in the Torricelli bill (H.R. 1468) and the Sikorski bill (H.R. 3096), is to appoint a commission to study this matter. These bills assume that there is a shortage of information about national service. But, given the foundation supported research and independent studies, it has been well studied in recent years. The one body of information that has not been adequately considered is the fund of experience that the independent and religious sectors can contribute. . . .

Historical Background

Almost all the arguments for national service have historical antecedents going back to the turn

of the century. William James, the Harvard psychologist and philosopher of pragmatism, proposed a service program as the "moral equivalent of war."²³ James was speaking in the context of an Ivy League setting where such a program would involve an elite whose contributions could make war unnecessary. He was not proposing a program for the masses who might do national service as a way of escaping military duty. While personally opposed to war, he was also critical of the passive style of doctrinaire pacifists, seeking instead active involvement to solve the world's troubles.

Leading up to the first world war, through the early twenties, there was an active movement—complete with a journal—advocating for compulsory national service. The thrust, however, was for military readiness. The policy proposals included fixing the health and economic motivation of the working class, along with their morals.

The rhetoric for national service was nativist, xenophobic, and concerned for absorbing the waves of immigrants still flooding America's shores. The journal, *National Service*, enjoyed the patronage of cabinet members, the financial elite, and academia's

leaders. The first issue made it clear: national service is “for the security and best development of American institutions,” and the “equal assumption by the youth of the Nation of the burden of military duty.” “There must be not only mandatory training but mandatory service.” “It is for the Nation to determine when and how each shall serve and whether in the field or in the factory.”²⁴

National service got support from both the left and right: It would develop “the real American citizen,” be anti-labor movement, anti-immigrant, and anti-pacifist, while inculcating “care of the person,” “care of the kit,” and “implicit obedience.” It would also arrange the “removal, at the critical age, of youngsters from pernicious surroundings.”²⁵ “The final effect of such a national army will be, not to militarize the democracy, but to democratize the military system.”²⁶

Philosopher Henry Dwight Sedgwick argued that Socialists would lose their opposition to war when it came closer. “The Socialist ideal of a people’s army must rest upon universal service.”²⁷

From the first military training camp financed by businessmen in 1913 (the Plattsburg Plan), there is a combination of civil religion and commercial interest.²⁸ In an

article on “The Red, White and Blue Camps” the “commercial, disciplinary value of insistence on punctuality, organization, authority, etc.” was lauded by Secretary of War Newton Baker.²⁹ Dr. Rufus J. Tucker argued that national service would “relieve unemployment,” “relieve immobility of labor,” “take care of immigrants,” and provide “the benefits of outdoor life and exercise.”³⁰ An anti-labor, union busting temper of the times was prevalent in the movement.

When the war came, the supportive language was already provided: “The war awakens our latent virtues.” “It means the enthronement of *service* as the greatest of all public virtues.”³¹ “It will mean a better nation physically and morally, and a more efficient nation from the economic standpoint . . . It is sometimes necessary to break the peace to keep the faith, . . .” National service would heat up the melting pot to fuse the discordant elements “into one common mass of Americanism.” “There is nothing in the Spirit of true Christianity which identifies it with peace at any price.”³²

President Charles Eliot of Harvard connected “Universal Service and World Peace.” Other university leaders joined in support.³³

The concern for youth (males only) was a central theme, (this was also the period in which the Boy Scouts were organized). “Activities for boys should include physical training, constructive endeavors [i.e., learning building construction skills], and personal hygiene and sanitation.”³⁴ It was argued, despite contrary evidence of epidemics in the camps, that it would control communicable diseases. New York State enacted a law that those who failed to enroll in the military training program would be denied a permit to attend school or to be employed. The measure failed to be implemented despite the support of Governor Al Smith.

The national service movement of that period established the terms of discourse. It contributed greatly to the acceptance of the Selective Draft Act of 1917. Its lasting result was the military reserve system and the National Guard, and physical training in the schools. Thus the movement begun by William James to provide a moral alternative to war was coopted for military purposes.

The Great Depression in the thirties brought about the first civilian working model. The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration

were responses to the high unemployment among youth. Each participant in the CCC sent some of his wages to his family. In a little more than nine years over three million young men, age 17-25, enrolled. The training and organization were under the direction of military officers. The CCC ended when the war provided plenty of employment for everyone, little need for welfare, and a draft. The CCC had alleviated the plight of the poor, and left a legacy of trees and parks.

When the U.S. entered the second world war, the former CCC camps were used by the government to house conscientious objectors in Civilian Public Service. (The Burke-Wadsworth Act had been pushed through the Congress in mid-1940 by the old guard of the training camps association, quite to the surprise of the administration.) The National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO) was formed by the historic peace churches, (Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren) who shared in administering the camps and advocating for the COs. Representatives from the Methodists, the Disciples of Christ, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Federal Council of Churches were added later to the Board. The churches

paid the costs of the COs in the program of government service.

The COs did work like that which the CCC men had done, but often work was meaningless. For instance, COs at the Luray, Virginia, camp swept snow from a mile of the Skyline drive, even though it was closed because of gas rationing. For some men of strong convictions and greater maturity the program was not satisfactory. By the end of the war other options did develop, such as service in mental hospitals, or as "guinea pigs" for medical research.

Some COs were engaged in work outside the camps. At first their earnings were to be transferred to the Treasury, where those funds would be used for the war. Some felt this made the work they were doing actually war-related. After they protested this arrangement, General Lewis B. Hershey, Director of the Selective Service System, promised that the funds would be put in escrow, "the frozen fund," for post-war peaceful reconstruction determined in consultation with the COs.³⁵

Many COs ended up not cooperating with an increasingly repressive government control. NSBRO was ignored by officials. The American Friends Service Committee and the F.O.R.

withdrew from the Board. Some COs walked out and took their chances in court. They preferred prison, along with the absolutists, to the boredom and the growing sense of compromise with war and killing.

Insofar as the CPS program was an instance of compulsory national service, it may teach us more what not to do than what to do. While many participants still remember the experience as important for themselves personally—in terms of confirming their ideals and setting them on a vocation of service, the program as a whole was a failure.³⁶ The conditions for such a test were unfavorable—but probably not that much more so than would be the conditions that govern any such program.

The link between national service and conscription was almost forged soon after the end of World War II. Confronted by the Iron Curtain and the Cold War, America expressed again its sense of national destiny confirmed by victory over Fascism in a surge of national purpose to oppose communism. Congress amended the Selective Service Act of 1948 to make it the Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1951. But, Congress never did fund the service corps portion, and only the military draft

remained in force until it ended in 1973.

Beginning in 1951 conscription of COs was authorized, but in a new pattern of individualized alternative service which had been piloted by the detached service of CPSers in WWII. This arrangement left the assignment of men to alternative service up to the local draft board. The government came to the Mennonites and to the National Service Board to help place the backlog of 5000 COs. Most COs found their own jobs, usually with the help of the network of voluntary service agencies and draft counseling agencies, especially the job-finder program at NISBCO. Frequently the local board rejected the job that the CO had a right to propose as "in the national health, safety, or interest," and a more punitive assignment was ordered. Men served in mental hospitals, or as orderlies in other hospitals, but many worked in community service agencies, some even doing draft counseling. . . .

Voluntary service agencies among the churches and other community programs discovered a pool of young men for tasks that were awaiting. Regrettably, the creative edge was dulled by the cynicism that many COs developed over the entire

Vietnam enterprise and the deceptions that successive administrations undertook. CO placement in alternative service did demonstrate that a pluralistic, locally based program, a form of national service in cooperation with private and public agencies, was a viable option.

The Sixties brought the high water mark of federally sponsored voluntary service programs. In his inaugural address President Kennedy called for the creation of a Peace Corps. He struck a note of idealism. "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." The Peace Corps furnished an outlet for the service impulses of a college elite wanting to put their talents to work. While many of the participants would have found some way to express their idealism, the Peace Corps gave them a special mystique.

The initiative of the Peace Corps was followed closely by Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a domestic peace corps aimed at "national service." The Teachers' Corps, Foster Grandparents program, and other projects of an optimistic age were organized under the umbrella of ACTION. VISTA took the "war on poverty" seriously and began local organizing to change the

structures that foster poverty rather than aiming merely to mitigate its devastating consequences. Joseph Blatchford, the director of ACTION under President Johnson, proposed a program involving eventually 41 million Americans. When the Nixon administration came in, it cut back financial support for these programs and "reined in" VISTA for ideological reasons. Since then, VISTA has shrunk to 350 participants. Most of the programs in ACTION have been abandoned under the Reagan administration.

Contemporary Government Programs

Beginning in the Eighties, mini-projects of national service under the auspices of state and local government have sprung up across the country. They took up the agenda abandoned in the cut-back of the Youth Conservation Corps and the Young Adult Conservation Corps.

The first of them, the California Conservation Corps, actually started out as the California Ecology Corps, designed to absorb the large number of conscientious objectors in California at the end of the Vietnam era. The COs were placed in former prison camps that had been abandoned as

unsuitable for prisoners. The administrators colluded with Selective Service to deny workers transfer rights and even threatened arrest for those who were dissatisfied. With the end of conscription the California Conservation Corps lost its punitive features and became a better model for what a program of this sort can be.³⁷

There are now forty conservation and service programs, counting the summer programs, sponsored by state and local governments. Some include a mixture of public and private funds, as in the Marin County Conservation Corps. The San Francisco Service Corps accepts only one out of ten applicants, maintaining a high selectivity ratio. Nevertheless, the emergence of government programs apart from federal control or a link to military service displays a new option in service programs to the society. It can be expected that the sponsors of these programs will resist efforts to centralize or militarize them.

Privately Sponsored Programs

It must also be remembered that along with those government programs, private groups (especially churches) sponsor a vast array of programs for service

to the society. They are already a form of national service.

The independent programs are so divided among the various sponsors and covered over by public acceptance that policy makers tend to ignore them. The Roman Catholic Church through its religious orders has a world-wide program of social service and education which operates on the basis of people giving voluntarily all or a portion of their lives. In a similar way, other denominations maintain social services and voluntary service corps of their own that vastly enrich the whole society. They engage not only youth, but people of every age. The Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers are well known for their service programs, but the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Methodist and United Church of Christ programs, Presbyterian Volunteers in Mission, the Lutheran Volunteer Corps, among others, are also church-run service programs of one or two years duration.

Shorter term or part-time programs for high school and college age young people have also been part of the American religious and educational scene. Work camps for young people to give service to others and to broaden their own outlook are

standard in religious education programs of major denominations. Many high schools have service programs, and increasingly, religious and independent secondary schools require service credits to graduate.

The recent appeals by Father Theodore Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame, and by President Swearer of Brown for university programs of service have ample precedent. Dwight Hall at Yale, the Phillips Brooks House at Harvard, and the Christian Association at the University of Pennsylvania have sponsored structured programs of voluntary community service since the turn of the century. Berea College and Warren Wilson College are organized around workstudy programs with strong service emphasis. The Campus Compact, a new coalition of 120 colleges engaged in voluntary service programs, expands on the tradition. Fr. Hesburgh's call for a peace corps training program along the lines of the military Reserve Officers Training Corps (now Title II of Senator Pell's bill, S. 767, sponsored by Rep. Morella in the House) is in that same tradition.

Service learning is a component of many degree programs. There is a Partnership for Service

Learning and a Council for the Advancement of Experiential Education. Most professional schools are giving increased emphasis to field education and "clinical programs." Medical education has the longest required apprenticeship. Patricia Budd Kepler introduced to Harvard Divinity School in the seventies the concept of learning the "arts of ministry." The classroom analysis of particular cases of law that Langdell introduced to the abstract legal education curriculum in the nineteenth century is now being supplemented by increasing emphasis on the legal clinics.

The notions of national service and its links to education and the goals of the society interlock with thousands of existing programs and long-standing interests. The religious organizations and the educational institutions are already deeply involved in what is being proposed as national service. Their destinies are intertwined with what the government will do. Every citizen has an interest in a satisfactory outcome of the new appeals for service to the nation embodied in the particular proposals for new legislation.

The Deeper Issues

The proposals to involve youth in

service opportunities are both laudable and dangerous. They present both possibilities for achieving good consequences and opportunities for doing great harm. They require that a careful assessment be made of the will and the capacity for the nation to enter into such programs with sufficient resources and understanding to insure it will not be a debacle. Without such a will, talk about national service becomes irresponsible.

The most dangerous course of action would be to enter into a program of national service, thinking that it possesses some special (almost magical) power to end all that ails us: poverty, unemployment, drugs, and crime, lost sense of duty, diminished patriotism, and the failures of education and parenthood. The money that would go into the support of national service, 6-to-10 billion dollars for the DLC proposal, \$30,000,000,000 for a universal program, could easily solve the problems national service might solve. It also correlates with the cost of the super-carriers in the fleet.

The first requirement for a sober assessment of national service is an adequate concept of service. Being motivated to serve, the opportunity to serve, learning how to serve well, are essential to

the civilizing process. But translating that idea into actions and into policies for engendering such actions requires utmost sophistication and dedication.

In the first place, it is sobering to remember that service itself is more of a means than an end. Service takes on moral value only when such service is rendered for good ends. Good ends involve not some fixed and absolute set of standards and loyalties to which blind obedience is expected, but rich and perceptive understandings of complex realities that call for the exercise of empathy and compassion.

Some of the theoretical framework for the ethics of the push for national service is provided by a renewed conservatism in formal ethics, an emphasis on duty. This deontological theory, or stress on the "oughts" or doing the right thing, is a stress on the formal character of the action rather than the result. It is a traditional mode of religious reasoning. It sometimes is associated with authoritarian societies. It permits the question of ultimate ends to be set aside.

The dark side of service is the danger it presents when the context and purposes are distorted. The service of false gods is idolatry. Service rendered

the Devil is false service—demonic in character. The possibility of distorting service is present in every human situation, as when civic orders make totalitarian claims upon their citizenry or religions require blind obedience. Patriotism can lead to fanaticism, not only in a fascist state but in a democracy that makes its own claims absolute. Any system of service, and particularly any that is mandated by direct compulsions or controlling indirect sanctions, is safe only to the extent it engenders a kind of loyalty that includes searching and probing assessments of the nation's agenda. Indoctrination does not produce good citizens for democracies; unthinking belief does not make good religion. No state can be at its best if it does not have within it religious forces that are free to speak truth to power, and no religions are at their best if their conduct is totally immunized from public scrutiny and criticism.

The most effective way to maintain the openness requisite to a healthy attitude about service is to keep the range of options diverse. A program of national service recognizing as equally valuable service rendered under philanthropic or religious auspices holds more promise than one that sets up a single regimen under

governmental control. On one level this would make each group compete to keep its program attractive. On another level it allows various groups to put into practice the wisdom and experience that they have.

The repository of wisdom in the religious communities of America is rich and full. Many religious communities have long carried on programs premised on the importance of service. Religious orders are organized for service. Reflecting Max Weber's observation that Calvin emptied the monastery out into the world, whole denominations have organized their entire mode of being around a mission (*i.e.*, service) agenda.

Some way will need to be devised to see that the choice between doing service under private auspices and doing service in a governmental program does not become dependent upon financial wherewithal. It would be counter to good public policy for one to be available to persons of means, the other the only possibility open to the poor. The constitutional difficulties in keeping the choice of service fully open could prove enormous, particularly since the separation of church and state precludes (as it should) making payments directly by the state to

religious bodies to aid their religion.

Moreover, the ideal of free choice can be undermined if large-scale governmental programs are implemented in ways that compete with or overshadow what the philanthropic and religious sectors can accomplish. That can wash out the possibilities in pluralism and create the functional equivalent of a monolithic system even when that is not the intent of policy.

Just as all-embracing national service is dangerous—that it becomes interesting in the wrong ways—more dangerous still is a scheme that makes service uninteresting. If there is a danger in coerced service being distorted because it is directed to ignoble ends, there is another danger in debasing service by making it trivial. The experience of unsatisfactory service can extinguish the will to serve. Lacking passion, boring programs and restrictive environments can ruin appreciation of the joys of service to others. Unserviceable service serves another devil, *acedia*. As both Ann Boyd and Harvey Cox have suggested, *acedia*, sloth, is the only one of the seven deadly sins that is still alive. And it is cousin to boredom.

Service is too important a matter to be trivialized by routinized, least-common-denominator tasks done over a prescribed time. Certainly the wrong notion of service is taught if the work is limited to picking up cans by the roadside, and conceived of as a year or two after which one can go back to being selfish, or even to doing really significant work.

A central factor in proposals for national service is the pretension to educate young people in the meaning of service. The educational preoccupation of religious bodies is with children and youth and their faith, which includes values and morality. Therefore, any program that intends to define a regimen of service for youth, to instruct them in its virtue, takes up one of the major concerns of the religious side of our society.

When the state indicates it is also going to inculcate the value of service, the religious sector feels its special competence is being invaded. These religious bodies constitute an independent and collateral set of institutions alongside the state in the pair of "church and state." When large-scale government-run programs for service are implemented, they almost inevitably compete with the agenda of the religious and independent sector. And they do

it at a least-common-denominator level, washing out the distinctives of the pluralistic society. So the life of religious communities is bound up in what happens to "service" in the total society.

The religious institutions should support the state's effort to provide opportunities for service, despite the unreflective pretensions to teach service. Insofar as the apothegm "experience is the best teacher" is true, the opportunity to serve is of prime importance. The resources necessary to provide those opportunities are increasingly in the hands of the state, for the services that would be provided are now increasingly regarded as entitlements of all people. Just as the provision of services is now regarded as a duty of the state, so also opportunities to serve are inevitably connected.

The state should consider the concerns and experience of the religious communities both for the support they offer to the goals of service the state espouses and for the critical wisdom they bring to the question of what is serviceable service. The religious community can provide a motivation that the government cannot. . . .

The experience of religious groups in America is the richest

repository of experience with service programs, both voluntary and compulsory. The religious community favors service unequivocally. The background study for the Presbyterians says: "Instead of depicting service as a reluctant, passive, menial role, Jesus defined service (diakonia) in terms of joyful, voluntary, active response to ultimate reality."³⁸ Thoughtful people can support government programs that are not compulsory nor coercive, that honor private conscience and religious beliefs, and that do not constitute a link with military service. . . .

In order to teach service, significant tasks should be undertaken and the full apparatus of the educational system should be engaged in the teaching of skills. One of the often spouted theories as to the benefit of national service is that people will be taught service automatically. And, that the deficiencies of the educational system will be compensated for in such a program. Rather than being an alternative to the education system, service to the society requires the full cooperation of the education system.

Service that is serviceable cannot be learned apart from the participation of those who are being served in the prescription

of service. "Nearly all proposals focus on the needs of those who would do the serving, and portray a general picture of social problems that the participants might alleviate. The wishes and self-determination of potential service recipients are hardly mentioned. The proposals thus perpetuate a notion of service which is being repudiated by enlightened social agencies, including voluntary service agencies of churches."³⁹ If service is to be something other than condescending charity, we must learn to fit the provision of help to the promotion of independence rather than dependency-inducing relief. Development aid requires the cooperation of those who are on the receiving end.

Service also requires individualization. In the same way that the Aid to All Handicapped Children Act, PL 94-142, requires an individualized education plan (IEP) to be prepared for each client, so education for service needs an IEP. Every person is different and their education should be fitted to their personal needs and capabilities. Those talents should then be turned to the service of others. Many of those talents are discovered in the context of service learning, and so contextual learning is the favored

mode in many programs in schools and churches.

Service should not be limited to age specific groups. The opportunity and incentives for service should be provided to every age. If service were to be made compulsory, then should we not require those at their prime of their skills and wisdom to give a year? Would not a service draft of men and women forty-five be the best use of our human resources?⁴⁰

The modeling to the young of service by those who are older is an important dimension of teaching service. Like religion, it is not so much taught as caught. When the society exhibits a concern for service, when the leaders are willing to pledge their lives, fortunes and sacred honor, then others will follow. Service is not age specific. A national service policy should foster service by people of all ages, both sexes, and by the rich as well as the poor.

Still another issue to be faced is the impact a national service program might have on patterns of employment. . . .

If the reason some work that is valuable for the general welfare does not get done lies in the fact public and private sectors cannot pay for such work on a

commercial basis—does that not raise an issue as to how to get national priorities straight in the allocation of resources? Is it socially beneficial to extract such work by coercion, or should sufficient resources be found to pay for it at going rates? Is there enough such work to keep any sizable service corps busy on a continual basis, and would the nation foot the bill for having such work done even on a reduced level of outlay? Moreover, will it not be recognized as a form of socialism? Will a society that has never wanted its educational system or its military services to offer competition with private productivity be likely to welcome with open arms a national service program that does so?

Then too, questions must be raised as to whether eighteen or nineteen year old young people with little advanced learning or particular experience (and less and less training at home in helping arts) can accomplish the tasks which most need be performed. The notion that the needs for child-care or for geriatric services can be satisfied by floods of young people on short-time assignment may be wishful thinking at best, or even folly. The long-term needs in our society are for persons with "high-tech" abilities, particularly

with advanced abilities in interpersonal relations. It could be a major mistake to divert to low quality services young people who might better be turned to the intensive cultivation of their potential talents in programs of professional education. . . .

More Questions & Observations

Would a program of national service be talked about at all if there were no draft or prospects of a reinstated draft? Are these seemingly benign proposals mainly designed to make military conscription more palatable?

Would a program of large scale national service survive a challenge to its constitutionality unless it was tied to the war powers part of the constitution? A study of this matter prepared by the American Law Division of the Library of Congress assessed national service as a form of involuntary servitude forbidden by the Thirteenth amendment.⁴¹ "It is highly questionable whether power exists in Congress to conscript men for other than military service. It is also possible that any such system, would be held to constitute 'involuntary servitude' within the meaning of the Thirteenth Amendment."⁴²

We cannot answer these questions conclusively, since they would

have to be decided in the courts. However, the following precedents would undoubtedly figure into the deliberations:

"The undoubted aim of the Thirteenth Amendment . . . was not merely to end slavery but to maintain a system of completely free and voluntary labor throughout the United States. Forced labor in some special circumstances may be consistent with the general basic system of free labor. For example, forced labor has been sustained as a means of punishing crime, and there are duties such as work on highways which society may compel. But in general the defense against oppressive hours, pay, working conditions, or treatment is the right to change employers." *Pollock v. Williams*, 322 U.S. 4, 17-18 (1944).

The power to conscript for national defense relies upon a Supreme Court decision rendered at the peak of patriotic fervor in World War I, *Selective Draft Law Cases (1918)*, interpreting the constitutional clause at Article I, sec. 8, cl. 18. That decision has been regularly reaffirmed, most recently in *O'Brien*. "The constitutional power of Congress to raise and support armies and to make all laws necessary and proper to that end is broad and sweeping. (citations omitted). The

power of congress to classify and conscript manpower for military service is 'beyond question.' " *U.S. v. O'Brien*, 391 U.S. 367, 377 (1968). But the extension of that power to order persons to civilian work, except in lieu of induction, is certainly questionable.

Will national service inculcate a "civil religion" which is a rival to true belief in service? Will the program divert young people from the beliefs and vocations for service in the religious community? Will the program constitute an educational context that will secularize young men and women at a crucial point in their development when they most need to be in sympathetic touch with the family and church or synagogue and the values they represent? Will the service that is taught be a truncated version of what the depth of religious belief would seek?

Religious bodies have a right, indeed, a duty to ask these questions because a truncation or secularization of the idea of service could directly and adversely affect their own efforts to instill the idea of lifetime service into young people. Young people and their vocations are a central focus of religious concern, and the constitution may well indeed protect their right to

exercise that concern without interference or even competition from the government.

Schools and service programs are central to the pedagogical interest of those in the religious community. Some religious schools require the completion of service activities as a condition for graduation, still others were founded for the sake of developing the service motivation of students, and the specialized schools and religious communities often focus on the meaning, skills, and purposes of service as a life-long principal activity. Service or "ministry" is now the accepted translation for the biblical *diakonia*. Thus ministry, understood as service, is becoming understood as the purpose of the life of the believer. Service is not limited to those in the leadership, but it is for every believer from their baptism or initiation into active religious life. Service is not limited to the nation-state, but is "for the life of the world." . . .

Our traditions and rights of free exercise mandate that service will always be an open question, to be defined by the initiative of the servers, morally accountable to those who are served, and limited by the just constraints of a free society.

Conclusions

Service, while particularly appropriate in the pedagogy of the young, must be part of the value system of the whole society. Service is not a duty that is to be discharged in one or two years by the young who may then go on to "making it" in a selfish world. Short term and part-time programs of service are often sufficient, however, as a beginning, so that high school and college based service programs are ideal for many young people. The example of others who live out their service, public servants without corruption, for instance, sets the expectation for the young. It is the life of service that needs to be developed in the context of communities of faithful people of all ages and employments who teach each other the meaning of service.

Service experience is most fruitful when worked out, as it can be in voluntary associations, on an individual basis, taking into account the convictions, motivations, interests, and commitments of the person who is expecting to do the service, and the needs and expectations of the persons who are to be served. While that kind of careful tailoring might be possible in a small, voluntary, governmental

program, it would undoubtedly be impossible in any large scale program, especially a system of universally required service.

The inherent contradictions between the ideal of a free society and enforced servitude, between true servanthood and compelled service giving, between the free and full exercise of religion and governmental programs to train character and morals, are very great. The government might put its resources to best use in strengthening and expanding existing programs. Even the small-scale government programs such as the service corps of state and local government, will inculcate a commitment to serve only if the programs actually serve well an independent purpose well worth achieving.

In conclusion, we strongly express our contention that any public policy to encourage service should:⁴³

- 1) guarantee pluralism of initiative and organization, limiting the unit size and competitive scope of any national programs, and enable religious groups to participate without compromise;
- 2) be truly voluntary, and thus free from coercion, including

ties to the right to educational opportunity;

- 3) avoid connection with military manpower needs, including any agency for recruitment or for administering conscription;
- 4) provide for conscientious objection to national service itself in any coercive system;
- 5) avoid age specificity while encouraging the young;
- 6) engage participation of those who are served in defining the content of service;
- 7) subsidize all programs equally or not at all;
- 8) involve both men and women while respecting the concerns of women for special protection, especially as they are expressed in some religious communities;
- 9) give significant work and education, while not competing unfairly in the labor market and the education system; and,
- 10) serve purposes beyond sectarian and limited national interests.

NOTES

¹The D.L.C. first supported national service and a return to the draft in its survey of national security, *In Defense of America*, Sept. 1986.

²Toricelli was the principal sponsor in the House in 1984.

³Available from the DLC, 499 South Capitol St., Washington, DC 20003. 71 pp., \$5. See the review in *The Reporter for Conscience's Sake*, June 1988.

⁴"Sen. Nunn's Push for National Service Points Up Use of Conventions for Causes," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 21, 1988.

⁵*The Washington Post*, July 17, 1988.

⁶e.g., "A Policy Blueprint for Community Service and Youth Employment," Roosevelt Centennial Youth Project, Frank J. Slobig and Calvin H. George. Sept. 1984.

⁷*Youth and the Needs of the Nation*. Washington: The Potomac Institute, 1979. *National Service: What's at Stake?*, 1980.

⁸Richard Danzig & Peter Szanton, *National Service: What Would It Mean*, Lexington, Massachusetts, Lexington Books, D.C. Heath, 1986.

⁹*Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 4, 1987, p. 34. The largest grantee has been Public Private Ventures, Philadelphia, which received over half a million dollars to assess the state and local government programs.

¹⁰Charles C. Moskos, *A Call to Civic Service: National Service for Country and Community*, New York: Free Press, fall 1988. See also: Charles C. Moskos, *The Military: More than Just a Job*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1988.

¹¹810 Eighteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

¹²October 17, 1986.

¹³Eberly publishes an occasional newsletter on developments in national service, 5140 Sherrier Place, N.W.,

Washington, D.C., 20016. Sherraden, M.W. and Donald J. Eberly, eds., *National Service Social, Economic, and Military Impacts*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1982. He is preparing a book for 1989, *Forty Years of National Service: A Promise to Keep*.

¹⁴*National Service*, Commission on Voluntary Service and Action, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115. The Commission publishes *Volunteer*, which catalogues opportunities for voluntary service.

¹⁵"National Service and the Church," *Journal of Church and Society*, Vol. LXIII, No. 4, (Mar.-Apr., 1973). See also, *Social Progress*, Vol. LVII, No. 2, (Nov.-Dec., 1966).

¹⁶*The Coming of National Service*, Steve Esbensen, World Ministries Commission of the Church of the Brethren, 1972. *The National Service Debate*, Luann Habegger Martin, NISBCO, 1976.

¹⁷"National Service," *National Affairs Backgrounder*, Oct. 1983. New York: American Jewish Committee.

¹⁸The proceedings will be published in the fall of 1988. The statement is available from NISBCO.

¹⁹"Democrats, Joint Chiefs Choose Sides on Draft Question," by Cynthia Mason, *The Reporter for Conscience's Sake*, Vol. XLIV, No. 1.

²⁰550,000 must be recruited annually. In each cohort of young men in the 20 year-old first priority group that is eligible for induction in the draft, half will fail the mental or physical examination.

Conceivably, with only 1,600,000 young men available in 1992, no inducements would be sufficient to maintain the all-volunteer armed force at 2,166,000. The last time the pool took one of every two was during the draft for the Korean War.

²¹The Selective Service System estimates 3-8% will be COs. (letter to NISBCO, 1984) NISBCO estimates 10%. West Germany is holding steady at 13%.

²²Many participants in a conference on Selective Conscientious Objection, held at the Catholic University of America in the spring of 1987, urged this solution. *The Reporter*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, (Apr.-June, 1987).

²³In a speech at Stanford in 1906, published in 1910.

²⁴*National Service*, published by the Military Training Publishing Company, of the Military Training Camps Assn. of the U.S.A. Physical training—Military Training—National Health and Safety. New York, New York. The first issue is dated Feb. 1, 1917.

²⁵"A Plea for Universal Military Training," R. Adm. Casper F. Goodrich, U.S.N., Vol. II, No. 5, pp. 367-372.

²⁶"Democracy and Military Service," Major John R.M. Taylor, U.S.A.; Vol. II, #3, p. 166.

²⁷"Socialism and Universal Military Training," Vol. I, No. 3, p. 152.

²⁸See also "Commercial Value of Military Training," Dr. Lewis Sanders, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, #1, p. 44.

²⁹Vol. I, No. 1, p. 10.

³⁰"Economic Aspects of Universal Military Training," Vol. II, #2, p. 146.

³¹"What It Means to Be 'In the Service,'" Margaret McIvor Tyndall, Vol. V, pp. 32-33.

³²"The Plattsburg Idea of Universal Military Service," General Leonard Wood, U.S.A., Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 12-14.

³³Vol. I, No. 1, p. 8.

³⁴"Under Military Age Training," Chas. A. Taylor, MA, Commandant Camp Penn, Vol. II, #3, pp. 177-188. See also: "Boy Building at Camp Roosevelt," Vol. 8, #5, p. 269, and "Military Training Means Physical Fitness," Dr. Victor C. Vaughan, Late Colonel M.C. U.S.A., Vol. 8, No. 5, p. 209.

³⁵Despite major legislative effort—including testimony by Gen. Hershey—which would have made NSBRO the administrator of the funds, the fund was lost and the promise never kept.

³⁶When Curtis Tarr, the Director of Selective Service at the end of the Vietnam War (1970), proposed instituting a system of orientation camps for COs, none of the groups who had shared in NSBRO supported his proposal. Tarr was convinced that universal national service was the logical next step in replacing the draft, although in retrospect he preferred voluntary national service coupled with the draft. Tarr had discussed with other officials in the government and "influential people in private life as well. . . . [the establishment of] a

broader program." *By the Numbers*, by Curtis W. Tarr, Washington, DC., National Defense University, 1981, pp. 88-89.

³⁷Col. McCann moved on to work for the Selective Service System where he directed the alternative service program.

³⁸"National Service and the Church," *Journal of Church and Society*, April-May 1973, p. 25.

³⁹*Idem.*, p. 20.

⁴⁰Income averaging was a tax incentive for volunteers who could give a year or two in service if the loss of income could be spread over several years. For instance, mission agencies use physicians, teachers and technicians in subsistence work for short periods, and those volunteers are sometimes restricted because of the loss of income they must cover.

⁴¹Opinion letter from the American Law Division of the Library of Congress, to the House Armed Services Committee, p. H2352-H2354, *Congressional Record*, April 21, 1971.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. H2352.

⁴³Approved in principle by the NISBCO Board and Consultative Council, December 6, 1987.