

THE NATIONAL SERVICE DEBATE

Legislators, educators, a general, a student, and community activists give their views on whether the U.S. should initiate some type of national service.

Should young Americans serve one or two years in either the armed forces or a civilian social service force?

More and more legislators and citizens are debating some version of this question. The topic is not new, so why has the interest in it been growing? The major reason seems to be the threat of the return of the draft. Another is the social and economic cost of youth unemployment. Still another is the older generations' perception of youth as either irresponsible and uncaring or deprived of the opportunity to serve.

Many see national service as a way to attack three problems: millions of young people without meaningful work, the poverty that grips a large portion of the population, and shrinkage of the social service budget. Some add an alternative to compulsory military service to that list. Others view national youth service—particularly a compulsory program or one that includes a military option—as a potential violation of personal liberty and a gigantic boondoggle.

Last spring the Committee for the Study of National Service, a group of 13 private citizens funded by foundation grants, issued a report entitled *Youth and the Needs of the Nation*. Subsequently the Committee invited interested organizations and individuals to attend a national conference to discuss the Committee's and others' findings. (Single copies of the report will be provided to *Synergist* readers as long as they are available. For this report and information on the conference and on a coalition being formed to succeed the Committee, write to The Potomac Institute, 1501 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.)

The majority of those attending the conference agreed that a *voluntary* national *youth* service not linked to military conscription is desirable, but no consensus emerged as to how such a program should and could operate.

Obviously the debate is just beginning. Several bills will be going before the House and Senate in the next few months, and numerous studies are now in progress. Because service-learning educators possess much of the nation's expertise in constructing programs that serve both the community and the individual, it is important that they take part in the debate. By acting now they may have the opportunity to help form an effective national service program or to prevent an ill-conceived one.

To spark the debate, *Synergist* presents nine points of view on national service, including that of a workshop group (represented by Edythe Gaines) concerned with service for those under 16. (All but one writer—Congressman Paul N. McCloskey—attended the Committee's national conference.)

The writers include three legislators (Senator Paul Tsongas, Congressman McCloskey, Congressman John Cavanaugh), two members of the Committee (Harris Wofford and Edythe Gaines), a brigadier general who is also an educator (Phillips N. Gordon), a high school student (Kevin Thompson), a community organizer (Lisa Cobbs), and the director of ACTION (Sam Brown).

Be it resolved . . .



Senator Paul Tsongas

. . . the benefits derived from the national service experience would be seriously compromised by compulsory service . . .

Paul Tsongas

I have pushed for a Presidential Commission to conduct a one-year study of how best to implement a program of national service. The Commission would include public officials and representatives of the private and voluntary sector, as well as a substantial number of young Americans.

My proposal for further study did not stem from a lack of enthusiasm for national service. As a former Peace Corps Volunteer, who re-enlisted after law school, I am very

excited about the possibilities of a large-scale national service program in this country. My proposal came after extensive consultation with a variety of interested persons. We decided that the enormous potential of national service demands a careful, thorough approach.

If national service is to be successful, it will require a wide base of support. It must be especially well received by young people and by federal, state, and local officials who run volunteer programs. The

Paul Tsongas is the junior senator from Massachusetts.

Presidential Commission can make contact with these people during the study and involve them in the idea's evolution. It is especially important that we remedy the lack of participation to date on the part of young Americans in this debate.

I fear that to go full steam ahead with a national service program could alienate many important segments of American society. Officials of volunteer organizations in and out of government might see it as an infringement of their territory rather than as the provider of expanded programs and services that it really is. We must raise people's consciousness about national service, develop the best possible plan, for it and then push Congress and the administration in the right direction.

Many issues merit further study. One basic question is which particular human needs would be served by the jobs created. Other key issues are cost, pay scale for volunteers, and overall coordination. Another challenging question is how to involve youth from all ethnic, economic, and regional backgrounds.

Two of the most fundamental questions are voluntary service versus mandatory service, and the service program's relationship to military service.

Personally, I strongly favor a volunteer service plan. I feel that the benefits derived from the national service experience would be seriously compromised by compulsory service, whether civilian or military. The wonderful learning, sharing process that volunteers experience cannot be expected for an unwilling worker in national service.

There has been much confusion and dissent on the military aspect. I oppose mandatory service, and thus I oppose the draft. A system of national service should not be used as a back door method of filling the ranks of the All-Volunteer Armed Forces, as some members of Congress have suggested. Fear that a service program will be compulsory has caused strenuous opposition. At the present time, I believe that a program of voluntary national service is much more practical and is based on a better principle.

It makes no sense, however, to establish a Presidential Commission

with preconceived conclusions. Members should take testimony and conduct research with open minds. We who believe in the concept of national service should remain receptive to the Presidential Commission's findings.

There are many neglected needs in the United States that a system of national service could address. But an equally important purpose of this idea is the learning inherent in human service. My faith in service-learning was shaped during two years as a Peace Corps teacher in Ethiopia. It was the greatest learning experience of my life.

National service would help young Americans understand the complexity of chronic problems. It would put youth in touch with issues on a human scale, and provide an antidote to the self-centered trendiness of the 1970's.

We must alleviate some of our nation's ills while supplementing the education of our youth. We need further careful study to find the best way to elevate the principle of service in our nation. Those who do serve will be paid back with interest all their lives.

Paul N. McCloskey, Jr.

I have a great fear about an all-professional Army; I think this country is far better served by an Army, in times of peace, of reluctant citizen-soldiers. There is a great benefit in having a reservoir of ex-military men who will carry to their grave a very deep skepticism of what admirals and generals may advise is the means and necessity of keeping the peace.

During the next several decades we are going to have to have a combat force in readiness. Most of us, of course, would prefer that our Army be made up of volunteers, if at all possible. We would not like to return to the draft if the All-Vol-

unteer Army is competent and combat ready.

Increasingly over the past several years, however, we have seen evidence that the All-Volunteer Force concept is not working. Reserve force levels in particular are deteriorating rapidly, and it is clear that in the event of a major war, the Selective Service System could not be reactivated quickly enough to deliver the additional 650,000 personnel required.

The Army recently asked for standby reinstatement of the Selective Service System, and a Government Accounting Office report recommends this action as well.

These problems threaten our constitutional responsibility for the national defense. We are sorely in

need of a system of military recruitment that can provide essential manpower. At the same time, we are failing to utilize a vast reservoir of the nation's youth to meet social, economic, and environmental needs.

A number of us have introduced the National Youth Service Act, a bill designed to join the abilities and idealism of our young people with our need for combat-ready Armed Forces and the fulfillment of a number of other goals of the federal, state, and local governments. This bill does not require universal conscription or military service, and it

Paul N. McCloskey, Jr. represents California's twelfth district in the House of Representatives.



Congressman Paul N. McCloskey

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might serve to remove the need for any conscription.

The national service concept is not new. Mentioned by William James at Stanford University in 1906 as "the moral equivalent of war," the legislation was originally conceived by ACTION's Don Eberly in 1966, shaped by the nonprofit national service secretariat, and first introduced in the House by our colleague Jonathan Bingham in 1970.

It is our feeling that today's youth are not opposed to national service; they may well oppose the use of conscription to support undeclared wars such as Vietnam, but duty, honor, country, and a sense of obligation to serve the nation and mankind are very much a part of the ethic of today's youth.

That sense of obligation can hopefully be implemented under the basic provisions of our proposed bills. The basic elements of the plan are as follows.

1. The Selective Service System will be replaced by the National Service System and all persons, men and women, will be required to register within 10 days after their seventeenth birthday.

2. Information on service opportunities will be made available to all persons between their seventeenth and eighteenth birthdays.

3. All registrants will have the option of serving in a civilian capacity for one year or in the military service for two years or more, and will be allowed to defer such service until the age of 23.

4. At the age of 18, persons will have the right to elect:

(a) Two years of military service, which will entitle them to four years of educational and training benefits paid at the base monthly rate provided to Vietnam-era veterans but adjusted to account for cost-of-living increases;

(b) Six months of active duty, followed by five and one-half years of Reserve obligation;

(c) One year of service in a civilian capacity; or

(d) None of the above, in which case they will be placed in a military

lottery pool for six years of draft liability. If military manpower requirements are not filled during this period, these individuals might be required to serve two years of active duty and would also incur a four-year Reserve obligation. They would be entitled to two years of educational and training benefits.

5. If voluntary enlistments are not adequate, then and then only would one be subject to possible conscription.

6. The Civilian Service Corps will be operated by a National Youth Service Foundation as outlined below.

(a) A National Youth Service Foundation will be established by law. This will be a quasi-public organization and will receive appropriations from Congress.

(b) The Foundation will be operated by an 18-member Board of Trustees with 12 of its members to be appointed by the President, and the following persons to serve as ex-officio members: the U.S. Commissioner of Education, the Administrator of the Office of Youth Development, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training, the Director of ACTION, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, and the Director of the National Youth Service Foundation, who also will be appointed by the President.

(c) An Advisory Council will advise the Board of Trustees on broad policy matters. It will have 24 members, at least eight under 27 years of age.

(d) Present federal programs providing opportunities for youth service will remain in effect. These include the Peace Corps, VISTA, Teacher Corps, College Work-Study Program, Job Corps, and the various youth programs funded by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

(e) The Foundation will invite units of state, regional, and local governments to submit applications, outlining plans within specified guidelines.

(f) The Civilian Service Corps will have two major options: community

service and environmental service. Community service applicants will interview for a wide range of local community service projects sponsored by public agencies or private non-profit organizations. Those who wish to travel in search of community service projects will do so at their own expense.

(g) Most sponsors of the environmental service option will be federal, state, or local agencies. Most environmental projects will require travel costs as well as expenditures for supplies and equipment. Such costs will be the responsibility of the sponsor.

(h) Military pay for junior en-

listed personnel will be reduced to a subsistence level.

(i) The Civilian Service Program ideally will be phased in gradually over a three-year period.

John Cavanaugh

The following statement has been adapted from the Congressional Record, April 10, 1979.

The inadequacy, excessive cost, and the inherent unfairness of the All-Volunteer Force concept of military manpower procurement has become increasingly evident to the Congress and the American people. The All-Volunteer Force has failed to adequately meet our country's essential needs for military preparedness while imposing an unbearable and endlessly escalating cost on our people. However, the more serious and ultimately the fatal defect in the All-Volunteer Force is that time has proven the current system is not a "volunteer" system at all. The AVF has proven to be an unjust and inequitable system of economic and racial conscription. A system in which those who have the least in our society are offered the opportunity to be trained to risk all in exchange for the very thing which they have been denied by the society they are asked to defend, a job.

Can anyone honestly say that the 42,020 black Army accessions, 34.9 percent of a total of 120,351 in 1978, were voluntary when we know that last month 35.5 percent of all black Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 who said they wanted work could not find it? The truth is we have been using the All-Volunteer Force as a social safety valve to relieve our society from the consequences of our failure to provide true equality of economic and em-

ployment opportunity for this Nation's minorities. At the same time we have relieved all those members of our society who are enjoying its maximum benefits from any obligation to contribute to the protection, preservation, and improvement of the system. This is a grievous social wrong and must be stopped.

So long as our Nation and this Congress determine that it is essential to our preservation to maintain a large and ready military system, justice demands the obligation for meeting the manpower needs of that system must be shared as equitably as possible by all of the beneficiaries of our society.

Others have observed the injustice and inadequacy of the current military manpower system and have concluded that the remedy is to require a period of public service from every young American. Approximately 4.3 million young people turn 18 each year. Our current military requirements do not exceed 700,000 persons per year. The cost of such a total mandatory service program has been estimated by CBO at \$24 billion. I believe these proposals to be unjustified by our Nation's needs and unacceptable in cost.

Our country does, in fact, have many needs beyond those of the military which are equally essential to our national interest.

The care and protection of our national resources, the health care and social needs of our poor and elderly, the redevelopment and revitalization of our urban areas are all areas of current commitment by our national government. These

needs, as our military needs, are becoming increasingly difficult to meet at the current cost.

We do not need to find new ways to spend our national treasury; we need to find a better way to meet our currently identified needs and goals, both military and civilian.

We must, therefore, initiate a system of universal registration for public service for all young Americans between the ages of 18 and 26 years from which our country's manpower needs, both military and civilian, could be met.

Each agency of the Federal Government would be required to designate a specific number of positions as youth service positions which would then be filled by young Americans either voluntarily or through the monthly conscription. These young people would serve either in the military or civilian youth service positions at a subsistence level of pay. We could through this system offer substantial relief to the current fiscal burden of our Government while not retreating from our legitimate and necessary national needs and assuring that the obligation for the burden of meeting these needs is more equitably distributed in addition to providing the opportunity for a meaningful utilization of the energies and abilities of young Americans.

Summary Of The Provisions Of The Public Service Act

1. The Selective Service System

John Cavanaugh represents Nebraska's second district in the House of Representatives.



Congressman John Cavanaugh

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will be replaced by the Public Service System. The Director of the Public Service System will be appointed by the President. Each state shall have a state director, a state headquarters, and an appeals board. Each county will have a local placement center. . . .

2. Every young adult will be required to register with the local placement center between his or her seventeenth and eighteenth birthdays. . . .

3. The individual will have the following options:

(a) Volunteer at any time between the ages of 18 and 26 for eighteen months of active duty military service;

(b) Volunteer at any time between the ages of 18 and 26 for six months of active duty military service followed by a three-year active reserve commitment;

(c) Volunteer at any time between the ages of 18 and 26 for a two-year period of service in an approved civilian service position;

(d) elect any six-month period between his or her eighteenth and twenty-sixth birthdays during which to expose himself or herself to a random selection process for induction into:

(i) The active duty armed forces for a period of 18 months, or

(ii) The active duty armed forces

for a period of six months followed by a three-year period of service with the active reserve.

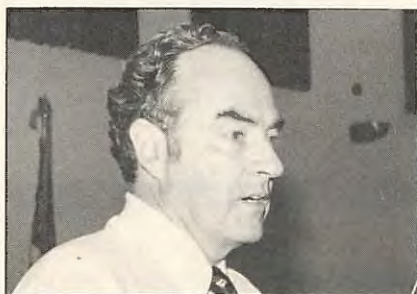
(iii) The civilian branch of the Public Service System for a period of two years.

4. Individuals who do not volunteer for public service and who choose to submit to the lottery will be allowed to indicate their preference for military, military reserve, or civilian service. . . .

5. The current system of veterans's benefits will be made available only to those volunteering or selected for military active duty for a period of 18 months or more. . . . Those volunteering or selected for civilian service will receive a subsistence wage during their period of service.

6. Every federal agency will be required to designate a minimum of five percent of its employment positions to be filled by Public Service registrants.

7. Those persons who are found to be mentally or physically unfit for service will be exempt from participating under this Act, as will those individuals who meet strict standards of conscientious objection to the entire program. Those who are temporarily unfit, pregnant women and mothers caring for children, and those with family hardships will be deferred for so long as is necessary.



Harris Wofford

Today, little is asked of youth except that they be consumers of goods and services.

Harris Wofford

Is the idea of large-scale voluntary youth service an idea whose time has passed?

Fifteen years ago the Secretary-General of the United Nations said he was "looking forward to the time when the average youngster—and parent or employer—will consider one or two years of work for the cause of development, either in a faraway country or in a depressed area of his own community, as a normal part of one's education."

U Thant was responding to the

Peace Corps and to the volunteer programs springing up in many countries. In the mid 1960's the President of the United States also called for a "search for new ways" through which "every young Amer-

Harris Wofford was co-chairman of the Committee for the Study of National Service. Formerly president of Bryn Mawr College, associate director of the Peace Corps, and special assistant to President John F. Kennedy, he is a Philadelphia attorney and author of the forthcoming book Of Kennedys and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties.

ican will have the opportunity—and feel the obligation—to give at least a few years of his or her life to the service of others in the nation and in the world.” But the Vietnam War intervened, and the search Johnson proposed ended almost before it began.

The Committee for the Study of National Service was formed in 1977 to resume the search. In 1979 its 13 members and study director, a former Peace Corps Volunteer, issued a report, *Youth and the Needs of the Nation*, which recommended that “all young people should be challenged to serve full-time for one or more years in meeting the needs of the nation and the world community.” The report explores in detail how a voluntary National Service system might be established and developed in stages, so that a million volunteers might be in service within five years. Year by year the system would find a variety of opportunities for civilian service—in the home community, in national parks, in other parts of the country, and overseas. Tutoring low-achieving students, care of the elderly, day care of children, and rehabilitation of dilapidated housing are some of the priority projects proposed.

In a time of budget balancing, opposition to bureaucracy, and cynicism about government, is there any reason to think such a national program has a chance?

Versions of the idea are being advanced by such astute and diverse figures as Vernon Jordan of the National Urban League and former Attorney General Griffin Bell, Governor Jerry Brown and Senator Alan Cranston, Andrew Young and William Buckley, along with edu-

cators such as Martin Meyerson, John William Ward, Steven Muller, and (on the Committee for the Study of National Service) Jacqueline Grennan Wexler and Father Theodore Hesburgh. They share the view that National Service is an idea with broad appeal because all Americans are concerned about their children or the young people they know.

Today, little is asked of youth except that they be consumers of goods and services. The Committee for the Study of National Service concluded “that the nation’s social, economic, educational, environmental, and military needs, including the need of young people to serve and be productive, and the need of our society to regain a sense of service, together make a compelling case for moving toward universal service for American youth.”

The Committee stressed that it proposed moving *toward* the goal of universal service by incentives—such as post-service stipends for education, like the GI Bill of Rights—but without compulsion. That may sound like a contradiction in terms—voluntary and universal—but consider secondary education: Universal completion of high school is our goal, although it is not required.

There are two pressing reasons why such a big goal may now be seriously considered: the continuing problem of youth unemployment and the mounting pressures for a return to the draft.

National Service would complement existing job training programs and direct assistance to the unemployed. If 200,000 young people who might otherwise have gone without work volunteer among the

million each year who would have the experience of full-time service, the list of unemployed would be reduced by that much. Having worked in challenging assignments, under supervision, alongside young people of different backgrounds, the participants in National Service should emerge from the experience with increased confidence, motivation, and ability to cope with the complex world of work.

Vernon Jordan believes that National Service could break the vicious circle of poverty and hopelessness in which many black and Hispanic youth are caught, and be the saving of a substantial fraction of the younger generation.

The threat of a renewed military draft may also force people to turn to voluntary National Service. Father Hesburgh has given testimony to Congress that, as one of the members of the Presidential Commission proposing the All-Volunteer Armed Forces, he knew that its “success would depend upon the idea of service being accepted by young people and recognized and respected in our society.” Before reverting to a military draft, he urges Congress and the country to “think hard and well on how to strengthen the spirit of volunteer service so that volunteering for the armed forces and for other service to the nation can be greatly increased.”

What is needed now is a nationwide debate, in the schools, among young people, and with citizens of all ages, on all aspects of the idea of National Service. Readers of *Synergist* will know how to do their part—which can be an important part—in helping the nation think hard and well.

Phillips N. Gordon

Through the past seven years, public awareness has focused on problems of maintaining a volunteer Armed Force. Debates regarding mandatory national service for all youth must NOT exclude the op-

tion(s) for military service. Being practical, the military cannot utilize effectively the numbers that may be available through an all-encompassing universal plan. Without a non-military alternative, the Armed Services could not accept all registrants, which could lead to the in-

equities of the Selective Service System of the Vietnam era.

A national service plan is appropriate when it embodies a military option including varying terms of service for different military specialties and membership in such components as the Reserve and the



Phillips N. Gordon

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National Guard. There is little argument on the conclusion that shortfalls and deficiencies in the present system(s) hamper personnel support of our national defense needs, given various scenarios.

In existing conditions, the Armed Services have become one of the primary alternatives available to those not enrolling in higher education or having limited job opportunities. A National Service Program with a "weighted" incentive-options system can provide for our national defense needs, can develop a sense of service to the nation and community, and can exacerbate the skewed distribution of cross-section Americans willing to defend the nation.

Reason, not emotion, should prevail in debating or discussing the issue of whether the Armed Services should be representative of the social, academic, economic, and racial distribution of the citizenry to be defended. With non-military options available under a National Service Program, I perceive that a more equitable distribution would be achieved because of the attractive alternatives that are not available today.

To attract a viable cross-section, or mirror reflection, of the youth, substantial post-service educational and employment benefits (similar to the GI Bill of Rights and the Peace Corps readjustment allowance) apportioned by type and length of military service should be authorized. Modest cash stipends could be offered for enlistment for specific duties or terms of service to attract individuals who may not aspire to further formal education or who do not want to wait for a post-service adjustment payment.

Voluntary military enlistment, as an option within a National Service

Dr. Phillips Nason Gordon, a brigadier general stationed at Fort William Harrison, Indiana, has been closely associated with Army procurement programs for more than 20 years. As a member of the Reserve Components, he is active in personnel strength and training system.

Program, is not inconsistent with the central theme of "service" to our nation. A program's incentive system should reflect the level of service that is rendered, acknowledging the possibility of risk of life, prolonged duty away from home, and loss of some individual privileges. Since I perceive the nation's defense to be the highest order of service, greater incentives should go to those directly involved in that defense. All organizations involved in the National Service must support the true sense of service through efforts to foster pride in belonging and a social structure responsive to the needs of the youth. By use of a military option with varied incentives, a more representative cross-section of youth can be enlisted, resulting in peer encouragement to share in meaningful training and work that will help break down the barriers between the poor and the middle class, the educated and the marginally educated, the blue collar laborer and the white collar executive. This supports the objective of social cooperation and responsibility to help others.

Integration and pride should be a positive by-product of the enlistment of a broader cross-section of Americans as a result of the broader appeal of military options.

It is realistic to provide some paramilitary training with the non-military options. Based on skills and experience acquired, the individual would earn a military service and specialty classification. This can be recognized by the youth as "readiness" for further service to the nation if the need arises. Such individuals would, upon completion of the non-military service, become eligible for part-time reserve components' participation and benefits.

According to the Constitution, the President, and the Congress, it clearly must be recognized that any debate must address the need for the services of youth in the regular forces, the active reserves, and the standby reserve programs to achieve the needs of our nation under various contingencies. It would appear dangerous to have a universal Na-

tional Service that only addressed non-military options, leaving the Armed Forces to compete with social programs that may offer incentives greater than the military could afford in terms of service time, ci-

vilian job-skill training, and geographic location of "service." It further would seriously dilute the true spirit of what service to our nation, its citizens, and the peoples of the Free World should provide.

The reliance of each Nation on its youthful soldiers for the deterrence of aggression is not a new consideration.

Kevin Thompson

Teens don't want the government forcing them into national service. That's the opinion I heard most often in preparing this article, and a story I wrote last May for *New Expression*, a 60,000 circulation newspaper by and for teens in the Chicago area.

"I don't like the idea of being in the military or in anything I'm forced to do," said Allen Nelpomunceno, a senior at St. Ignatius High School in Chicago. Yolunda Bouchee, a junior at Lindblom High School, said, "I don't feel it's my duty to serve."

Another teen said he thought youth already face plenty of pressures, without required service. "I think most of us are more concerned with where our next dollar will come from and how we are going to beat inflation," said Anthony Zeringua, a senior at Quigley South High School.

But because these teens say they don't want to be forced to serve doesn't mean they are against the idea of national service. In fact, 65% of teens responding to our survey said they "would be willing to volunteer one year to work with

others their own age, on national problems, in return for room, board, and minimum wage."

"War tactics just wouldn't benefit me. Civilian service would make me feel as if the years wouldn't have been wasted," said Mary Wolski, a junior at Lane Tech High School.

The idea is still very new to teenagers. Even though our survey suggests teens would volunteer, my interviews tell me many are unsure of what volunteering really means. In the same survey, 47% said they would choose military service over civilian service, because the military provides benefits. "Why serve and get nothing in return?" asked one youth interviewed. Only 34% said they would choose civilian service.

At a time when unemployment among teenagers (particularly blacks and Latinos) is soaring, it's difficult to see the need to sacrifice one year for volunteer service. More than anything I think young people need information—about what volunteer service might be, about why it is important to them and to the nation, and why youth can uniquely contribute.

Any plan for national service should provide the following:

- A coordinated project where youth are involved in determining

the work they will do. Their perspectives should be considered in determining project priorities.

- An opportunity to gain a sense of self-worth, and importance in the community.

- Job training and placement. Every job would not have to be related to a career, but youth should gain job-related skills and, in some cases, be able to plot careers in the area in which they volunteered.

Personally, I believe volunteer service sounds like a good idea. But everything I've heard about it so far has been too vague. I, and the other teenagers I spoke with for my story, need more information.

If volunteer service is based on local community needs and teens are involved in planning the volunteer jobs and looking at community problems, I believe it can work. I would be interested in volunteer service. But as long as it looks like a program that is forced on us by the government, I think teenagers will resist it.

Kevin Thompson, 17, is a reporter for New Expression, a teen-agers' news magazine published by Youth Communication, a nonprofit agency in Chicago.

Lisa Cobbs

To ask about "The Trouble With Kids Today" is much like asking about "The Negro Problem" or "The Woman Question." It's clear right off that you're not one of them.

For the young people I have heard from, the major significance of the proposal for a national service is that it is the *very first* social plan that, at least in concept, does not seek merely to keep them out of trouble and out of the way of adults. For that reason alone, it is an important idea and deserves serious

consideration. Because it is indeed the first proposal to look upon youth as a resource rather than as a nuisance.

Lisa Cobbs, coordinator of the Young Women's Journalism and Community Education Project, San Diego, has been an active community organizer since the age of 15.



Kevin Thompson

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Lisa Cobbs

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ance or a threat, however, it is also highly suspect.

Who, exactly, will benefit most from a program of national service? Young people, politicians, or the military? Is the proposal the forerunner of a new social policy aimed at treating young people more seriously and equitably? Is it a last-ditch effort by politicians to avoid the public criticism they are going to face if they can't find some better way of pacifying unemployed youth? Or is it a ruse for re-establishing the draft—a move which the overwhelming majority of young people definitely would oppose?

Young people, by and large, are the first to say they need more opportunities, more jobs, more independence, more respect, more ways of contributing to the world around them. And many of them are, I believe, more than willing to serve the best interests of their communities and their peers. But they are not willing to be exploited, to be tricked, or to do someone else's dirty work.

I believe that a national service organization for young people is, in many respects, a good idea, and I would like to see it implemented—but only under the following conditions.

1) *It must not be compulsory.*

To assume that anything that is compulsory is "bad" would be to ignore the simple, basic fact that all of us, throughout our lives, are compelled to do a great many things that we might not wish to do—from eating to sleeping to working. We do them in order to survive, and we usually don't mind.

Similarly, a nation must attend to all of its "chores" in order to survive and it usually does this by compelling its citizens to help out in one way or another. In this country, except in the case of a national emergency, our taxes—which are compulsory—pay for our collective chores.

Under the current system, it would be completely unfair to use other forms of compulsion or to demand from youth a kind of commitment we don't expect from anyone else. If we did we would have servitude,

not service, and the goal of instilling in young people the desire to give freely to their communities would be undermined. Besides, if the program really does provide the kind of opportunities and leadership it hopes to, compulsion will not be necessary, and if it doesn't, the strongest inducements will be to no avail.

2) *Young people must be part of the leadership.*

What is at stake here is not only the democratic tradition, but also the success and credibility of the entire program. That young people should have a voice in their own governance is a principle that, if stated, usually evokes a vague approving nod by policy makers. In this case, however, that vague assent must become an unswerving commitment to direct youth participation at *all* levels of decision making, planning, and administration if this program is to have even a chance of winning the respect of the country's youth.

3) *It must be integrated into education and work.*

Adults have been thinking up ways of keeping young people out of the labor force for years, and most young people know it. Any program that would merely increase the number of years a young person has to wait in order to become self-sufficient will never succeed. But if it could be integrated with high school or college, or with work in some way, then the program's chances of being effective will be enormously heightened.

4) *Youth of all backgrounds must be involved.*

In times of high unemployment, the subsistence offered by a program of national service would clearly be a motivation for many youth from impoverished families to get involved, but most certainly not for those from economically and socially privileged backgrounds. A way must be found, therefore, to create a kind of motivation that cuts across social and economic lines. A way must be found that will help to ensure that this program will not become yet another retrogressive

force that favors the already privileged—while imposing a near compulsion on those who for economic reasons have little choice.

These, then, are the primary conditions under which a program of national service for youth could be successfully implemented, I believe. Some other important considera-

tions that will need to be fully discussed are the issues of bureaucratic centralization versus community control; cost; the age range; and ways of breaking down, as opposed to reinforcing, sexist, racist, and age-oriented role stereotypes. But above all—or rather first of all—we must find a way to engage as many

young people as possible in a comprehensive debate concerning all of these issues, so that whatever program ultimately does take shape, it does so with the full participation and under the leadership of young people.

Sam Brown

The growing national debate on reviving the draft and the current review by the federal government of its youth employment programs provides thoughtful people with a rare opportunity to make the case for a voluntary and decentralized national youth service. This would be open to all young people regardless of race, sex, or class background. To compel young people to serve would be fundamentally undemocratic and only reinforce the perception that they are to be used. To allow only a specific sex or a specific class to serve would go against the progress we have made in the last 25 years to make our society more equal.

The reasons for such a voluntary national youth service seem to me to be compelling. One of the most important yet least understood reasons for the creation of a national service program is that it could bring a halt to the growing negativity toward young people in general. The more we talk about the youth problem, the more people think we mean that young people are a problem. The victim stands condemned.

The general image of young people has undergone an extraordinary change in the last 15 years. No longer is the idealistic Peace Corps or student volunteer seen as the nation's promise. Instead, the drug user, the mugger, the uneducated, or the unemployed young person being helped by a training program have captured our attention and too often are viewed as a burden to society. That we need to change the

image of youth that now exists is to suggest more than a slick public relations campaign. To the contrary, it suggests that we revalue in a fundamental way how we look upon young people and see their role in society. It also suggests that racial and class discrimination may be at the root of this growing negativity.

Providing young people with the opportunity to serve their country can be a powerful way to transform the current negative stereotype of youth. The remembrance of the Civilian Conservation Corps as the best and most popular program of the New Deal and the continued popularity of the Peace Corps with the American people are indicative of how programs that allow young people to serve their community shape our basic attitude toward them in a positive way.

Other reasons are no less compelling. Voluntary national youth service can serve both as a rite of passage and as the moratorium that many young people need in order to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Not the least important reason for a national youth service is that it is wanted. For more than 40 years the majority of Americans have favored such a proposal. Poll after poll has demonstrated wide public support for some sort of national service program. A recent Gallup poll of young people between 18 and 24 indicates that 77 percent of those who might be most immediately affected are in favor of such a service program, and four million young people are definitely interested in serving.

Fostering altruism in our society,

providing every young person with a tangible common denominator of equality, and meeting unmet needs are three other compelling reasons that a program of voluntary national youth service ought to be seriously considered.

The need for services is well documented. The American Institute of Research has estimated that more than three million opportunities for service are not now being fulfilled. Creating a voluntary national youth service does not mean that every leaf in every national forest will be picked up. There is more than enough work to be done in our cities, and the increased necessity to conserve energy will only add to that work. ACTION's current Youth Community Service project (YCS) in Syracuse, which is testing one model of a decentralized national youth service, has been able to find more than 2,200 service opportunities for its 950 volunteers in its first year of existence.

An obvious question is: How can such a large yet decentralized national service system work? Based on ACTION's two experiments — YCS and the Program for Local Public Service tested in Seattle in 1974 — a national service program would operate as a grant program wherein ACTION would set forth the basic policies while the day-to-day operational decisions would be made by the grantees. The grantees could be units of state, county, or local government, or private non-profit organizations. In the early

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Edythe Gaines

What may be needed is an instrumentality both to assist schools in redefining their mission, including service as a legitimate aspect of that mission, and to assist schools and community organizations or groups in forming links through which, together, they can move to fulfill that mission.

years ACTION would continue to experiment with the type of grantees, as it has done already in Seattle and Syracuse.

ACTION would stipulate such basic policies as eligibility of young people and sponsors, payment levels that in all probability would be similar to the stipends given VISTA volunteers (\$78 per week), certain training elements (such as service-learning, medical coverage, and legal rights), and the requirements for acceptable service activities.

Grantees would describe the local need for a national youth service project, the nature of its linkage to the community, its plans for recruitment of volunteers and sponsors, the education and training opportunities available to participants, its end-of-service job placement pro-

gram, and other program features, such as opportunities for young people with handicaps to serve.

Whether such a national service program becomes a reality remains to be seen. All the signs of young people's alienation suggest that society at worst can be accused of neglect and at best of not understanding the immense damage we do ourselves by making our young people despair. Too often in the past we, as a nation, have been unwilling to attempt the unusual except in crisis, yet the crisis is brought about by not attempting the unusual in the first place. Creating a voluntary national youth service would be more than doing the unusual. It would be the right thing to do both for our young people and our nation.

Edythe J. Gaines

The following is adapted from the report on a workshop, "Service Below Age 16," at the national conference sponsored by the Committee for the Study of National Service in May.

Should there be service opportunities for youth below the age of 16?

A resounding, yes, is the response of our group. *Youth and the Needs of the Nation* is correct in suggesting that age 17 or 18 is perhaps too late if we are to reestablish the ideal of service in our society. The problems of alienation and of the crisis of the spirit indicate that if we are to have the chance of reasserting the values of service, we need to begin at younger ages. Indeed, this is necessary to undergird the attitudinal stance needed for voluntary national service at ages above 16 years.

The group asserts that one of the prerequisites of any service program is that service must be made legitimate as part of the learning, growing up, and developing process. Getting good grades in school is perceived as legitimate. The need to make service to others legitimate is

just as necessary. Funding often follows perceived legitimacy. At present, action-learning programs are imperiled in the wake of the Proposition 13 mentality. While there still are funds for programs related to career education, even these are suffering diminution in funding level.

Yet, there is firm and positive consensus that service programs for those below age 16 are desirable to the point of being vital. Such service activities make schools more meaningful places in which to live and learn. They help cut down on discipline problems, they make the curriculum more reality-based, they make values learning possible in a nonsermonistic way.

Finally, service for those under 16 is in line with what we know about youth development. Youth service organizations have discovered that the peak age for "joining things,"

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for wanting to be part of "project-type learning," is age 11, not 17 or 18.

Are there youth service programs for this age group that work?

Many, many programs of this kind exist, and they work. Some of those tested and briefly described to the group are: cross-age teaching, parenting programs, self-help projects, voter registration projects, urban gardening, health aides, comparison shopping for senior citizens, care of park systems, and work in consumer affairs offices. Service givers ranged from youngsters in day care programs through youth in senior high schools.

What is or should be the format or organizational structure for such programs?

The group agreed that there is no one formula for structure. Whatever structure is selected should arise from problem-solving imperatives rather than from program-development imperatives.

It was the consensus that both schools and community agencies must act in concert and in partnership based both on their mutual need for each other and on their mutual self-interest. While schools have not always, nor even typically, accepted youth service as their legitimate area of concern, they still are the institution where the youth are and with which we have to deal. What may be needed is an instru-

mentality both to assist schools in redefining their mission, including service as a legitimate aspect of that mission, and to assist schools and community organizations or groups in forming links through which, together, they can move to fulfill that mission.

The question was raised as to what the incentive is for schools and communities to join together in establishing and carrying out youth service programs. It was felt that the natural mission of both sides of this equation made it virtually impossible for either of them to carry out that mission optimally without the other. Each has separate and unique resources and skills that the other requires. Examples included were the credentialing capability and access to service opportunities that schools have and the access to certain types of personnel, such as bilingual people, and to other service opportunities that community groups have.

What is the evidence on the question of effectiveness?

The consensus was that such service programs are rich in their contribution to all aspects of learning and to broader areas of personal and social development of youth. Many examples of positive impact on cognitive learning were given. It was demonstrated over and over again that there is no necessary dichotomy between basic-skills learn-

ing and service-learning. Writing skills learned via publications such as *The Eye* or the *Foxfire* books can be developed to the highest levels, for example. Improvement in self-definition and in the development of a sense of self-worth were cited as usual outcomes of service-learning. It is believed that the following factors have a bearing on the effectiveness question.

1. Youth feel that they are getting a real, hands-on experience that assists them with one of their basic needs—the need to make career choices. They value the opportunity to learn what they don't like to do as much as learning what they do like to do.
2. Youth feel that the experience gives them a handle on the question, "Who am I," including issues around sexuality.
3. Youth feel that the experience gives them a desired and desirable outlet for recreation.
4. Youth feel that it gives them an opportunity to deal with any aspect of their life on which they feel somewhat out of balance.
5. Youth feel that it gives them a desired opportunity to work with an adult who cares—an experience with "the believable other."

These are the elements of any effective service program, and we endorse them as broad guidelines for future work. □

"I have been in a number of schools . . . where some form of community service in the curriculum is accepted as routine. Neither the teachers nor the young see themselves as dreamy do-gooders. Instead, they are making early contact not only with some of the harsh problems of American society, but with their own inner resources for caring for the victims."

—Colman McCarthy, Syndicated Columnist