

ANTI-DRAFT HUMBUG

On the streets of San Francisco and elsewhere, we are being subjected to the most excruciating humbug by some of those opposing draft registration.

There are several honest reasons for opposing draft registration. Right-wing Republicans like Jesse Helms oppose the registration because they are generally uneasy about government intrusion in personal lives, and therefore about peacetime conscription; they prefer a substantial beefing-up of our voluntary armed forces.

Then there are those Americans who think that the United States is a basically evil force on the world scene. They would like to see the American military dissolve, so that "American imperialism" can no longer be loosed abroad. Their ideological cousins, keyed down a notch, say that since our system is no better than anyone else's, we should just withdraw to our shores and leave the rest of the world alone.

All of these reasons for opposing draft registration are honest. They may be disastrously wrong, but they are honest. So is an honest pacifist opposition to registration. There are those who, for religious reasons, believe that violence *always* is worse than the alternative, and should *never* be used under *any* circumstances. But most of those who say they are pacifists, are not pacifists at all. Some of them use pacifism as a false mask, in a most cynical and anti-humanitarian fashion.

In his recent novel, *Vicar of Christ*, Walter Murphy created a fictional and heroic Pope who breaks traditional bounds in his espousal of social justice and peace. On behalf of peace, he abandons the old distinction between just and unjust wars. He advises the youth of all nations to resist military service of any kind, under any circumstances.

At the same time, however, on behalf of social justice, he foments a bloody revolution in a South American country beset by despotism. Well, he does not seem to realize it, but he is back to supporting a "just" war. One cannot have it both ways. The basis of religious pacifism is that one must follow God's prescription against violence; and in return depend upon God to set things right -- if not in this world then in the next. Anything short of that is not pacifism.

Others, of a somewhat different religious bent, believe that human life on earth is *more sacred* than that. To accept a life of abject and spiritually oppressive slavery -- for yourself or your neighbor -- is to degrade human life. It is the worst kind of crass materialism. There is the Talmudic story of Alexander asking the Jewish Elders what a man should do to live. They replied: let him kill himself (doing good). The approach is peace-loving, but not pacifist. It does make a distinction between just and unjust violence.

Read some of the literature that is being passed out on the streets these days, under the guise of giving to conscientious objectors legal advice which they certainly should have. The current leaflet, put out by the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, *urges* resistance to draft registration. It drips with virtuous admonitions against any involvement with the American military for any purpose.

Would they have asked the Iranians not to rise up in violence against the Shah? Or the Nicaraguans not to rise up in force against Somoza? Will they counsel the South African blacks to submit peacefully to their fate? Or the Afghanis? Would they have asked Russia not to resist the Nazi invasion? More important, would they have asked England not to resist the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia (a virtuous act which led to the despoliation of hundreds of millions of lives)?

Earl Raab
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If their answers are not all "yes," then we are back to the question of *when* force is justified, and *by whom*. Then let us debate the American military presence -- and draft registration -- in those political terms, honestly. Nothing is more callous than the hypocritical cant of those who hide their negative political beliefs about America -- and sometimes their contempt for the sacredness of human life -- under the mask of a self-virtuous and false pacifism.

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