

A military draft?

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There was a time when most members of Congress had served in the military, as had many people in the media. Today that is no longer true — and it shows in many ways.

Ignorance should at least create caution but it seems to do just the opposite. People with little knowledge about the military, and no personal experience, often have the most sweeping and unrealistic expectations, and even demands, to make on people whose lives are at risk in battle.

The military have been criticized for everything from not protecting an Iraqi museum while being shot at to not being as nice to the terrorists imprisoned in Guantanamo as people in safe and comfortable editorial offices would like.

More dangerously, TV re-

porters broadcasting from where shells are falling blithely say such things as "the shells are landing about five miles north of here." Does it ever occur to them that their internationally broadcast comments will reach those doing the shelling, who can adjust their range and kill more efficiently?

By Thomas Sowell

On the home front, life goes on today as if there were no war. Consumer goods are as abundant as ever and no real sacrifices are demanded of the civilian population, who are spectators rather than even tangential participants. None of this is healthy.

Some have suggested a military draft as a way to at least create some sense of realism about war and to share its burdens more widely and equitably.

Those on the left play the class-warfare card and the race

card to say the elites are sending other people's youths into battle while their own are sheltered. But the overriding question is: What would be the effect of instituting a military draft?

Such questions cannot be answered as if we were talking about drafting abstract people into an abstract army. A military draft today would be very different in its consequences from the military draft in World War II. Back in those days, the military drafted young men who were, by and large, patriotic Americans, who felt it their duty to protect this country from its enemies.

Today, a military draft would bring in large numbers of people who have been systematically "educated" to believe the worst about this country or, at best, to be nonjudgmental about the differences between American society and its enemies.

Though we could use a larger army of the kinds of people who have already volunteered, that does not mean we can get it by adding warm bodies fresh from

our politically correct schools and colleges, where standards and self-discipline are greatly lacking. Just getting such people used to the idea of duty and discipline could be a major drain on the military, not to mention lawsuits from groups like the American Civil Liberties Union were the little darlings not handled with kid gloves.

Moreover, so many American institutions, from Congress to the courts, have degenerated into irresponsible self-indulgence that the military is one of the very few institutions left with a sense of purpose for which it is prepared to make sacrifices. We dare not destroy that institution, or undermine its morale, by pouring into it very different kinds of people, who will be like sand poured into the gears of machinery.

This is not to say there are no civilians who would be valuable additions to the military. Such people need not be drafted. Our colleges block such people from taking ROTC by not allowing ROTC programs or military re-

cruiters on campus in the first place. Anti-military academics think they have a right to override their students' rights to reach their own conclusions and make their own decisions, or even to hear a different viewpoint about the military.

Patriotic and educated young Americans who want to serve in

the military are available. We need to stop academia from sabotaging national defense by blocking them from ROTC and from even hearing what military representatives have to say.

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