

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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TO DRAFT OR NOT TO DRAFT.

Of all the telegrams and letters which came to the desk when the Bill to extend the Selective Service Act was being considered, one was especially intriguing: It read, "God's curse on you if you vote to enslave our children." It's an indication of how explosive some legislation can be but I doubt if God's curse can be so easily invoked upon persons in public service who are no less zealous than other folks in seeking the truth. But this is not a sermon. It's an effort to present the facts on the continuation of the draft. So let's see where we are.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

For several months, the proposal to extend the Draft was being considered, both formally and informally in House and Senate. On March 21st, the House Committee on Military Affairs held formal hearings on the subject and heard testimony from General Eisenhower, Secretary of War Patterson, General Paul, church and labor leaders and others. A Bill was reported and debated on April 12, 13th, and 14th. The hearings contain over 160 pages of testimony. The debate covers 75 pages of triple-column discussion in the Congressional Record. Certain amendments were adopted. The final vote came on April 15th. By a vote of 290 to 108, the Bill passed and went to the Senate. The Senate was busy with the British Loan and failed to consider the House Bill despite the fact that the Draft expired on May 15th. So the Senate took a few minutes to approve a simple resolution which merely extended the present Selective Service Law to July 1st without any changes with the understanding that the Bill passed by the House would be considered at a later date. This resolution came to the House on May 10th and was considered and debated on May 13th. Two amendments were added. The Bill then passed by a vote of 280 to 84. In this form it was signed by the President.

THE ORIGINAL HOUSE BILL.

The three amendments which the House voted into its original Bill which passed on April 15th were these: (1) No fathers could be drafted without their consent. (2) The age limit was changed so that the draft was limited to those between ages 20 and 30 and excluded those of age 18 and 19. (3) The draft machinery was kept intact but no actual inductions could take place between May 15th and October 15 to see if volunteers could be obtained. This simply suspended the draft for 5 months. But since the Senate took no action on this Bill, these amendments had no effect.

THE SENATE BILL AS AMENDED.

So, the Senate passed a simple resolution to extend the Draft Act in its present form. To this Bill, the House added two amendments. (1) The first prohibited drafting fathers without their consent. That matter can be quickly disposed. The War Dept. stated that no fathers have been drafted since VJ-Day (Aug. 14, 1945). So the amendment was not especially important. (2) The second amendment excluded the 18 and 19 year olds from the draft. In other words, induction was limited to those between the ages of 20 and 30.

ONLY ONE IMPORTANT QUESTION.

At the moment then, there was one- and only one - important question involved. That question was - Should teen-agers be drafted NOW. That

word "NOW" is also important, because it goes back to the earlier action of the House when it inserted an amendment to suspend the draft for a period of 5 months to give volunteering a chance.

Drafting teen-agers had to rest upon one reason- and one reason alone - and that was that enough volunteers could not be obtained to maintain a certain military strength as determined by the War Department General Staff and still permit separations of those now in the service to continue until we had a completely volunteered army. If that need could not be shown, obviously the case must fall. Was the need shown, The testimony did not convince Congress because teen-agers were excluded from the draft by a vote of 3½ to 1. I believe a survey of the testimony will show the following. (1) The Navy does not need the draft. Captain Donaho, one of the Navy officers assigned to this matter testified as follows before the Senate Committee: "We do not need the draft either now or in the future to recruit a peacetime Navy." (2) The same would be true of the Marine Corps as a part of the Navy. (3) We need an army of 1,550,000 on July 1, 1946. (4) We need an army of 1,070,000 on July 1, 1947. (These figures from Eisenhower's testimony page 4 of the Hearings) (4) Strength as of April 1, 1946 was 2,300,000 (5) Reductions in the army will continue from 2,300,000 as of April 1, 1946 to 1,550,000 on July 1, 1946. (5) Another 480,000 will be discharged between July 1, 1946 and July 1, 1947. (6) A shortage of 165,000 is estimated on July 1, 1947 based upon 30,000 enlistments per month from July to December of this year and only 20,000 enlistments per month from January to July in 1947. (7) Highest enlistment came in November 1945 when 185,000 enlistees entered the army. Enlistments for March were estimated at 73,000 (8) No shortage is actually expected until October of 1946 and perhaps not until January 1947. Upon these agreed facts, Congress was not persuaded that teen-agers were needed and therefore excluded them. Finally, General Eisenhower himself testified before the Senate Committee in response to whether 18-year olds make good policemen (meaning occupational troops) by saying and we quote "I do not think they do." (9) The House has already passed a bill providing substantial increases in pay and allowances for enlisted men and War Department officials expressed the belief that this would increase enlistments by 30%. There, then is the whole story from which to determine whether Congress was right or wrong in excluding teen-agers from the draft.