

National Resistance Committee

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Letters

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Let's Be Serious When We Talk About War

'We Still Won't Go'

To the Editor:

Adam Wolman ("We're Feeling the Draft," Op-Ed, Nov. 28) says that "Even the most politically aware and left-leaning of my generation gave registration no more than a passing thought." Not so at all.

On the day in March 1984 when Mr. Wolman registered for the draft, I was imprisoned in Lewisburg Federal Prison Camp for having publicly declared my refusal to register for the draft. Millions of our generation refused to register or violated the draft law in other ways, and that resistance continues today.

"I can't see myself running away," Wolman writes. But I, and others like me, didn't run away. The safest and easiest way to avoid the draft was (and is) quietly to ignore registration. We knew that only those who spoke out could be punished. But we stood up, successfully for what we believed. It has been the most important — and proudest — decision of my life.

Justice Department officials hoped that an initial round of well-publicized prosecutions would generate sufficient registrations to maintain the credibility of the system. But registration rates fell dramatically where the few show trials of nonregistrants were held. The first trial prompted demonstrations in more than 100 cities and towns throughout the country.

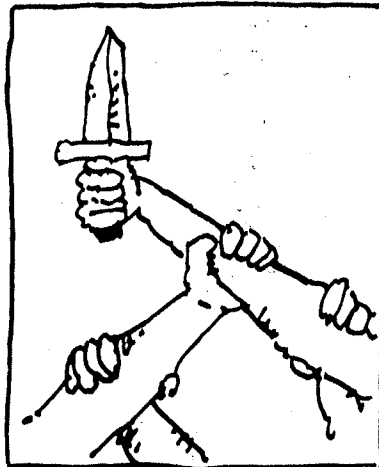
Only 20 nonregistrants were ever prosecuted, the last almost five years ago. The attempt to enforce registration has been abandoned, essentially in failure, while millions continue not to register.

Over the last 10 years, I have worked as an organizer for the National Resistance Committee and as editor of its journal, *Resistance News*. Many of those who refused to register — indeed, among the most politically aware of our generation — remain active for peace today. Many are already preparing for the likelihood that President Bush's war in the Persian Gulf will lead to draft reinstatement, first of medical workers and later of young men generally.

Any draft will, it is clear, be widely resisted. As Mr. Wolman points out, most of those who registered did so because they felt they had no choice, not because they are prepared to die for oil. Draft and military counseling organizations are overwhelmed with inquiries from people who don't want to fight this war.

Even many G.I.'s and reservists oppose the war. Dozens have applied for discharge as conscientious objectors. The first marine to refuse orders to board a plane for the gulf, Jeff Paterson, is facing a court-martial. Can one expect draftees to be more gung-ho than those who have "volunteered" for military "service"?

Massive resistance by the young people who would have been affected by the attempt to reinstate the draft



Karl S. Clark

that began with the return of registration in 1980 defeated that effort. Any new draft will face the same fate. Some politicians may by now have forgotten the antidraft movement. But we're still here. And we still won't go.

EDWARD HASBROUCK
San Francisco, Nov. 28, 1990

Statement of Purpose:

- To resist current U.S. preparations for conscription and war by encouraging those of draft age to refuse registration.
- To sponsor and promote non-violent demonstrations and civil disobedience to oppose draft registration.
- To build a grass-roots movement by collecting pledges of non-registration, distributing literature, holding public actions, forming support groups and working with existing organizations to resist registration.