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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Hoopla over 2 draft bills in Congress is needless

Throughout history, the military draft has been implemented with varying degrees of public scrutiny and outcry. First established in 1863 to shore up support for the Civil War (a move that resulted in heavy rioting), the Selective Service had inducted nearly 3 million men between the ages of 21 and 30 by the end of World War I. By the end of 1947, more than 10 million men had been drafted into service, according to the Columbia University Press.

When the Korean War began in 1951, the minimum drafting age was reduced to 18.5 years old, and exemptions and educational deferments started discriminating against working-class men. But it was not until the Vietnam War debacle and escalating public awareness about the inequities of the draft that it became a major social issue for the first time since the Civil War. Public outrage over the senseless killing of American lives mushroomed into public uproar, mostly conducted at the doorsteps of draft boards and induction centers.

Meanwhile, men fled the country or exploited technicalities by the thousands to dodge the draft, and in 1973 the 150-year-old mandatory "patriotism" was abolished, leaving the nation with volunteer-only armed services.

It seemed, finally, that the worst-case scenario of such a policy — that tens of thousands of draftees would die fighting a war many failed to understand — had mushroomed into a political change for the better.

That changed, however, in 1980 when Congress once again reinstated mandatory registration for the draft, ruling that it would only be used if needed. Now, with the escalating situation in Iraq, which some critics label the new Vietnam, rumors have circulated about renewed efforts in Congress to do just that.

And while those rumors are true, the chances of a draft actually happening are slim to none.

Two bills are currently alive in Congress — Senate Bill 84 and House Bill 163 — that would institute the Universal National Service Act of 2003. The act states, in part, that "it is the obligation of every U.S. citizen, and every other person residing in the United States, between the ages of 18 and 26 to perform a two-year period of national service, unless exempted, either as a member of an active or reserve component of the armed forces or in a civilian capacity that promotes national defense." The bills also amend the Military Selective Service Act to allow females to be drafted.

The problem with worrying about such legislation is simply that both bills suffer a serious lack of support from Congress and the general public. The Senate version, introduced by Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., in 2003, lacks any co-sponsors and has been lingering in the Committee on Armed Services for more than a year. The House version, meanwhile, has accumulated 13 co-sponsors, but has also been stalled in the House Armed Services Committee for more than a year. Currently, the bill is sitting in the Subcommittee on Total Force and awaiting Executive comment from the Department of Defense.

To give some perspective on the kind of pressing political matters that the Subcommittee on Total Force deals with, and thus how seriously the House takes the bill, the subcommittee is also considering a resolution that would express "the sense of the Congress that Harriet Tubman should have been paid a pension for her service as a nurse and scout in the United States Army during the Civil War."

But we digress. The point is this: The draft is a bad idea just like involuntary servitude is a bad idea. The notion that simply being a citizen in the United States means you owe something to the government is philosophically dubious. Being forced to fight in a war you might not agree with is downright undemocratic.

The Vietnam War brought out the worst in the draft, and it isn't likely that society will forget that minor detail very quickly. So don't go packing the bags for Canada yet; as of now all the hoopla is purely hype.



Eric Layton Illustration

Not a Duck problem

The cartoonish Oregon Duck mascot is offensive to ducks everywhere, but the University of Illinois' Chief Illiniwek is really offensive to American Indians because, well, humans have feelings.

So, more than 40 Illinois students, in a nod to the protesting gurus here in Eugene, took to their administration building Thursday in protest of their mascot. It was an actual sit-in. Good for them. Bravo.

Recently, our own rabble-rousers got all snippy-snappy when the athletic department scheduled men's basketball games against Illinois in 2004 and 2005. They referred back to a widely ignored resolution, drafted by law students in 2002, that asked Oregon's athletics department to not schedule games against teams with offensive mascots.

The debate is more stupid than Jessica Simpson with a can of tuna. The Illinois protest is legitimate because those are the people who have to live with a white guy wearing face paint and dressed up as a chief.

But this is their issue. Like America imposing democracy on the world, we here in Eugene feel it necessary to impose our hippie-inspired views on the country. If we see American Indian mascots as offensive, then dam it they're offensive. So we'll take a stand, and not schedule games against teams that use them! And nobody will notice! Yay!

I'm going to get blasted here for being too

conservative, for writing against change. But I like change just as much as the next protester.

I just think there are more serious things than mascot issues. Anybody who knows anything about sports knows that mascots are silly and stupid. They jump around and clap a lot. They're more of a distraction than anything else.



Peter Hockaday
 Today is Hockaday

And, most important, they honor people and places. Mascots aren't chosen to piss people off, they're chosen to appeal to many (gotta sell merchandise!)

Look at some of the mascots around here. The Portland Trail Blazers honor early explorers. The Seattle Mariners and San Francisco 49ers honor the West's sea and gold trades, respectively. The San Jose Earthquakes of Major League Soccer honor the Richter scale.

According to an Illinois investigation of the issue, the Chief Illiniwek mascot was first chosen to honor Illinois tribes, and the first costume was crafted on a reservation. The costume has changed only five times, and each time a new costume is donated by members of a South Dakota Sioux tribe. The Chief's dance at halftime was originally inspired by actual tribal dances.

Many people have argued that the mascot has changed over the years as our society has changed. Now, they argue, our progressive culture calls for progressive mascots. That's how you get politically correct — but boring — mascots like the Toronto Raptors and the Colorado Avalanche.

I don't think we need more progressive mascots, we just need a more open-minded approach to examining mascots. We need to realize that they aren't meant to offend and only meant to honor.

And we need to stop trying to force the issue. We need to let the Illinois students run their own protest. They've learned from the best: us. And they're ready to shake things up in Urbana-Champaign.

We shouldn't try to shake for them.

Contact the columnist at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Oregon has let its students down

I served on the "incompetent" OUS Board while the state went through the greatest depression since World War II. I did my best to balance educational quality, access and affordability. As incompetent as I may be personally, I managed to see what others did not. Our state universities have never had their own ballot measure.

GUEST COMMENTARY

This is a big deal, and unlike Measure 30, a measure focused on increasing access for low-income Oregonians could actually pass this decade in a state made popular

by political lip service for the importance of education, but little action beyond complaining about costs. Your editorial ("Thanks for memories, debts, Jarvis," ODE, April 7) does that beautifully.

The truth is the Legislature raised tuition; the state board and chancellor did not. Take legislative process 101. Further, affordability may not always be "what students want more than anything else" as your editorial claims. Just ask a freshman in a class of 300 being taught by a 22-year-old GIF right out of their undergraduate if affordability in education is their most important concern, or if quality is. An affordable education that amounts to being

treated like cattle and not challenged intellectually is neither good for the individual nor the state. Smaller classes, brilliant professors and outstanding facilities cost money. Your editorial ignores that all the belt-tightening in the world cannot make up for a state government that has financially given college students the middle finger.

Without more state money, a policy of increasing college affordability would greatly decrease educational quality. Your editorial ignores that fact and so do most lawmakers.

Tim Young, a graduate student studying public policy and management, served on the OUS board and as student body president of Portland State University.