

# LOOK WHAT'S REPLACING OUR NATIONAL ARMY ..... A NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

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By Paul Scott  
Washington, November 4—A far-reaching proposal on President Nixon's desk that bears careful watching is a recommendation that he name a special committee to study the feasibility of establishing a Universal Public Service System.

The little-noticed recommendation was made recently by a White House Task Force headed by Mrs. Withrop Rockefeller, wife of the Governor of Arkansas and a political power in liberal Republican circles.

The basic idea the new President's committee would explore is that "all Americans probably beginning somewhere between ages of 17 and 19, serve their country for two years in one of a variety of areas, including health and social welfare programs, and the military."

While similar plans for a Universal Public Service System have been surfaced from time to time in the past, what is significant about the new recommendation is its timing and the group making it.

Drafted originally by the "Whiz Kids" of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, the new Universal Public Service proposal was proposed by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara just before he became head of the World Bank. At the time, the plan received a cold reception in Congress and was shelved. Now revived by the Rockefeller group it comes at a time that

President Nixon has ordered Defense Secretary Melvin Laird to phase out the military draft by 1973.

Supporters of the proposed Universal Public Service System believe that the nation's manpower needs, especially in the health and social fields, will be so great by 1973 that a compulsory system of service will be needed to fill them.

By keeping the military option in their plan, the Rockefeller group believes Congress can be sold on the idea of requiring all American youth to give two years of public service to their country. One of the objectives of the proposed President's committee would be to highlight the manpower needs and to promote support for the new social army.

## CLEARING THE WAY

In their report to the President, the Rockefeller Task Force noted that "acceptance of universal public service involves a major shift in values; for it puts social duty on a par with military duty and requires every citizen to make a contribution to his country and himself."

The President was told that the establishment of Universal Public Service would have a tremendous impact on the manpower situation in mental disability and other human service fields.

The Rockefeller Task Force claimed that "shortages in such areas as laboratory technicians,

nurses' aides, and child care personnel would virtually disappear. And many young people exposed to public service would choose to make some facet of it their life work."

"Though mechanisms of operation and other details are necessarily vague at this point," the Rockefeller Task Force pointed out, "work settings, except for volunteers for military service, are seen as completely civilian and predominantly non-federal."

Recruits for the new social army would be placed in "the school system, day care centers, mental health and mental retardation programs, general health facilities, community services, police, fire protection, environmental and urban renewal programs, VISTA, and Peace Corps."

The Rockefeller group stressed that the program would also change the outlook of millions of youth, stating:

"Even more important, perhaps, universal public service would enhance mental health by providing a period of social involvement, and options to military service, for all young people."

Other controversial claims made in support of Universal Public Service by the Rockefeller Task Force included:

"It would enhance the skills and broaden the outlook of our youth during the critical developmental period of late adolescence

and youth adulthood;

"It would provide health and mental screening of all young people at a given age, approximately 18, with an opportunity for remedial programming in the following two years."

## COST IN BILLIONS

The study by a Presidential committee is needed, the Rockefeller group states, because of the size and scope of any Universal Public Service System.

Their report pointed out that "a competent and complex administrative structure will have to be set up" to handle the three to four million youth that would be screened each year.

Although the costs would run into the billions, the Rockefeller

Task Force concluded that the spending would be worth the effort, stating:

"Moving the concept of universal service to reality will involve much thought, discussion and planning. The effort is worthwhile, the Task Force believes, in view of the contribution that universal service promises to the health of our society and the quality of life of our nation. Costs, though difficult to estimate, would be in the billions."

President Nixon has told GOP Senators inquiring about the Task Force's recommendation that he is "giving it serious consideration and believes that the whole question of universal public service ought to be thoroughly studied."

# UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SERVICE