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## National Service Literature

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**BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY**

**National Service Literature**

BY DONALD J. EBERLY

**P**resident Bill Clinton declared on the night of his election that he would make national service one of his top priorities. He underscored this commitment soon after he assumed office by submitting national service legislation to Congress and by signing the act into law during his first year in office. It was somewhat predictable. Major national service developments have occurred about once a generation throughout the 20th century.

In 1906 the philosopher William James called for a moral equivalent of war, in which young men would be drafted for civilian service instead of military service.

**... the idea of young people performing full-time community service and conservation work has been a recurring theme throughout this century.**

In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which went on to enroll 3 million young men during its nine-year history. In 1961 President John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps, which has sent more than 100,000 young men and women to serve in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and, most recently, Eastern Europe. As a prelude to its major action in 1993, Congress passed the National and Community Service Act in 1990, which has

provided about \$70 million a year for youth service activities. And most recently the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton on September 21.

Thus, the idea of young people performing full-time community service and conservation work has been a recurring theme throughout this century. Only in recent years, however, have the American public and its elected representatives given close attention to national service as an all-embracing idea, one that challenges all young people to serve, supports them while in service, recognizes the educational value of such service, and offers financial aid for the education and training of those who serve. This attention has resulted in a number of books on the history of national service, its pros and cons, the experience of other countries with national service, and ways in which national service might become a societal institution.

**Foundation Stones of National Service**

William James's "The Moral Equivalent of War" is generally considered to be the seminal work on national service. He called for a "conscription of the whole youthful population" who would do such tough work as mining coal and building roads and tunnels. The result, he said, is that "no one would remain blind as the luxurious classes are now blind, to man's relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life." He first delivered the essay as a lecture at Stanford University in 1906; since then it has been printed in numerous publications, e.g., *The Writings of William James*, edited by John J. McDermott.

John Dewey, who insisted on striking a balance between practice and theory, laid a solid educational foundation for linking experience with educational growth. See, for example, John Dewey's *Intelligence in the Modern World*, edited by Joseph Ratner.

**A** work seldom cited in the national service literature but one that should be read by serious students in the field is Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's *Planetary Service*. It belongs with the foundation stones because it is based on a proposal made in 1912 by the author for an international youth service. In 1933, Rosenstock-Huessy took refuge in the United States from his native Germany. Here he was critical of the CCC for limiting itself to unemployed young men, and he was the chief adviser to the students who established Camp William James, discussed below.

**Intermediate Accounts**

A short-lived youth service effort involving young men and women from all walks of life was Camp William James. It had been launched by Harvard and Dartmouth students in 1939, with Eleanor Roosevelt and Rosenstock-Huessy as strong allies. The group set up camp outside Sharon, Vermont, and conducted a number of service projects from there. Jack J. Preiss

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was one of the participants in that camp and he gives an account of it in *Camp* William James.

An unpopular war in Vietnam and an unpopular system of conscription in the late 1960s led to the publication of numerous works on national service. The most comprehensive is *National Service: A Report*, edited by Donald J. Eberly. This book includes the plan for national service that this writer presented to President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Selective

### John Dewey ... laid a solid educational foundation for linking experience with educational growth.

Service in 1966 as well as the debate over compulsory versus voluntary service. The work expanded the discussion on national service beyond the immediate issue of making the draft more equitable. The 1967 conference reported on in this volume also examined costs, activities, organization, training, the role of women, the view of trade unions, and the relationship of national service to education. Among the contributors to the volume are Margaret Mead, John Naisbitt, Eli Ginzberg, Harold Taylor, Michael B. Katz, and (now) Senator Harris Wofford. There is a foreword by Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

The integration of service and learning is now generally referred to as service-learning, financial support for which is included in President Clinton's national service program. Others have called an article by this writer—"Service Experience and Educational Growth"—a seminal work in the area of service-learning. It describes four service-learning programs, including one pioneered by William R. Ramsay, Robert Sigmon, and Michael Hart, who have done much to formulate service-learning and instigate widespread interest in it, and who, with this writer, came up with the phrase "service-learning." This article reports on a nationwide survey of levels of support for

service-learning by colleges and universities, and concludes with a series of steps to be followed by educational institutions in order to maximize the potential of service-learning.

Most works of this time which dealt at any length with national service focused primarily on its potential to reduce draft inequities. Three works in particular demonstrate substantial scholarship and enduring concerns. They are *The Draft: A Handbook of Facts and Alternatives*, edited by Sol Tax, "National Service and U.S. Defense," a collection of papers appearing in *Current History* in 1968, and the 1971 "The Quest for Equity: National Service Options," published as a special issue of *Teachers College Record*.

A thorough review of national service possibilities is found in *Youth and the Needs of the Nation* by the Committee for the Study of National Service. It gives the outcomes of a two-year study by a group co-chaired by Jacqueline Grennan Wexler and Senator Wofford, with Roger Landrum as study director.

### Women and National Service

The literature of the early years assumed a national service by men. Women were excluded from the residential and largely military-directed Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. However they were equal participants with men in activities of the National Youth Administration of the 1930s and of the Young Adult Conservation Corps of the Carter years. Women and men have had equal status in the Peace Corps (since 1961), VISTA (since 1965), and the numerous state and local youth service programs that will receive a major boost from the new national service legislation.

As long as a male-only draft was in effect, the paths to national service were perceived as being different for men and women. Hubert Humphrey's Peace Corps bill of 1960, and candidate Kennedy's Peace Corps speeches during the 1960 campaign called for Peace

Corps service to be considered fulfillment of a man's service obligation under the draft. (Kennedy dropped that proviso after he was elected.) Women would be admitted as volunteers, but would receive the same stipends and health and education benefits as men. Once the draft ended in 1973, the path to national service became the same for both women and men.

### Contemporary Advocates

A powerful advocate of national service is William F. Buckley Jr., author of *Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe to Our Country*. In this thin volume Buckley does not explore the broader aspects of national service, but he does demonstrate that the appeal of national service is not limited to leaders in the liberal mold of Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Clinton.

The emphasis on national service as a responsibility of citizenship is strongest in the works of Morris Janowitz and Charles C. Moskos. Janowitz, founder of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, advocates initiatives that would reduce the gulf between the military and the civilian sectors of society. As outlined in *The Reconstruction of Patriotism: Education for Civic Consciousness*, Janowitz envisions national service as embracing both civilian and military service.

Moskos is the leading academic advocate of making federal grants and loans for higher education contingent on a period of national service. In *A Call to Civic Service: National Service for Country and Community*, Moskos reviews the history of national service, wrestles with the relative value of military and civilian service, and offers his proposal for national service.

Closely related to the theme of citizenship is the argument developed by Benjamin R. Barber for teaching democracy through community service. In *An Aristocracy of Everyone: The Politics of Education and the Future of America*, Barber calls for a universal community service requirement coupled with classroom reflection on what

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was learned in the service experience. Barber's case is fortified by his own pioneering work in creating just such a program at Rutgers University.

An account of the evolution of national service is found in this writer's *National Service: A Promise to Keep*. In this work, I recall my experience with both military and civilian service in the early 1950s, describe the evolution of the Peace Corps and service-learning, recount the results of pilot projects and years of legislative struggle, and reprint several pieces—such as "Service Experience and Educational Growth," cited above—showing how national service is related to the draft, education, youth unemployment, and other timely topics.

**N**ational Service: *Social, Economic and Military Impacts*, edited by Michael W. Sherraden and this writer, is an overview of national service. It gives the history of national service, describes programs in other countries, offers a plan for national service, and suggests likely impacts on youth employment, education, and the all-volunteer force. Among the contributors are Senator Wofford, Peter Edelman, Charles Moskos, Irene Pinkau, and Roger Landrum.

### Skeptics

Eric B. Gorham analyzes the national service proposals of Buckley, Moskos, and Eberly and finds them wanting. In *National Service, Citizenship, and Political Education*, Gorham calls for the politicization of service activities by, for example, teaching illiterate persons how to read through the use of books dealing with the inhumanity of poverty.

Another counterbalance to the advocates' position is found in a volume edited by Williamson Evers: *National Service: Pro & Con*. In this book, Milton Friedman weighs in with his free market economics and Martin Anderson with his libertarianism to argue against national service. They go toe to toe in debate with the likes

of Rep. Dave McCurdy and former Congressman Paul N. McCloskey Jr.

A widely-circulated and often cited work on national service is *National Service: What Would It Mean?* by Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton. The book came as a disappointment to this reviewer because it fails to answer its own question; it examined several theoretical models of national service rather than applied models put forward and defended by real people, and it failed to utilize research data on national service that was available. The volume's strongest feature is a survey of useful activities that are needed, that young people could do, and that would not displace employees or volunteers.

### International Accounts

Very few studies of national service have been made at the international level. The most recent is *The Moral Equivalent of War?: A Study of Non-Military Service in Nine Nations*, edited by Michael Sherraden

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and this writer. In this comparative analysis, the authors examine an array of existing national service programs: those requiring a period of service by university students or graduates (Costa Rica, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria); those in which service is linked closely to military service (Germany and Israel); those in which national service is viewed as especially important to nation building (Canada, Indonesia, Nigeria); those in which youth service is almost indistinguishable from the fabric of society (China and Israel); and those which have experimented with various kinds of national service but have not yet integrated them into their youth policy (Canada and the United States).

A primer on national service around the world is found in *National Youth Service: A Global Perspective*, edited by this writer. It briefly describes national service programs and proposals in 13 countries and gives an account of the first global conference on national service.

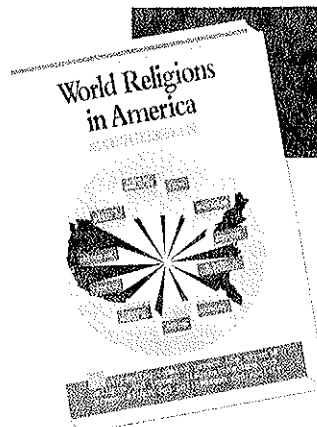
Two works describe very different forms of youth service in very different countries, one old and one new: In *A Chance to Serve*, by Alec Dickson of Great Britain edited by his wife, Mora Dickson, the author describes his pioneering work in challenging young people to serve and in founding organizations which have enabled them to serve both at home and overseas. In *Influencing the Youth Culture*, Joseph Eaton and Michael Chen describe and analyze various youth programs—several of which can be categorized as national service—established by the new state of Israel to acculturate young people from the Diaspora.

## Youth Policy

National service plays a minor role in several works dealing with the broad array of youth policy issues. Still, the works cited here are important to the study of national service because each is insightful and each shows a way for national service to fit into the well-established institutions of education and work.

Former Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz and the National Manpower Institute put forward an array of policies affecting young people in *The Boundless Resource: A Prospectus for an Education/Work Policy*. Greater emphasis on various forms of experiential education are recommended in *Youth: Transition to Adulthood*, a government publication prepared by the United States' President's Science Advisory Committee and the Panel on Youth chaired by James S. Coleman.

*Giving Youth a Better Chance: Options for Education, Work, and Service* identifies youth as "a twilight zone of uncertainty and ambiguity of status" and recommends voluntary national service to combat it.



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This work is by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, chaired by Clark Kerr. *The Transition of Youth to Adulthood: A Bridge Too Long* by the National Commission on Youth analyzes a variety of youth issues and strongly recommends a national service program.

## Present and Future

A possible future for national service is proposed in two booklets. *National Service: An Action Agenda for the 1990's*, by the Coalition for National Service, recommends a series of youth service initiatives, several of which formed the basis for the Clinton initiative and related legislative proposals. The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh of Notre Dame was a major contributor to this volume. *National Youth Service: A Democratic Institution for the 21st Century*, edited by this writer, begins with an analysis by Michael Sherraden of the widening and deepening gap that has

appeared in the unwritten youth policy over the last few decades. It includes a proposal by James Kielsmeier and myself that national youth service—embracing both civilian youth service and its links to education—become a societal institution, and describes how this new institution might overlap with existing institutions such as education, work, volunteerism, and the private sector.

The latest report on national service to appear as this essay goes to press is *Building a Consensus on National Service* edited by Nancy Ethiel, and it comes from what might seem to be an unlikely source, the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation. However, while researching a paper for a conference convened in 1993 by the Foundation, this writer learned that the Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the very few New Deal initiatives of President Franklin Roosevelt that Colonel McCormick supported. The booklet lives up to its title and

includes, as well, detailed survey data on national service presented to the conference by George Gallup Jr.

The bookshelf above should satisfy most students and general readers. For historians, persons writing dissertations, and others who wish to delve more deeply into national service, several additional works might be of interest.

### Related Works

Pacifists and military specialists should be referred to a work that describes the

**... national service is related to the draft, education, youth unemployment, and other timely topics.**

changing nature of conscientious objection to military service. *The New Conscientious Objection: From Sacred to Secular Resistance*, edited by Charles Moskos and John Whiteclay Chambers II, shows how conscientious objection, once the almost exclusive domain of the Mennonites and other so-called "peace churches," attracts increasingly large numbers of young men whose objection reflects more their personal philosophy than organized religion. Contributors describe the state of conscientious objection in 12 European countries, Australia, Israel, South Africa, and the United States.

If national service turns out to be the success promised by President Clinton, admirers of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt will be able to boast of some fairly strong roots planted by their heroes. The roots can be found in *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* by John Salmond, and *Eleanor and Franklin* by Joseph Lash. The CCC was the most popular of Roosevelt's New Deal programs: it was supported by 1936 Republican presidential candidate Alf Landon as well as Colonel McCormick. Chapter 45 of Lash's

work outlines a national volunteer service envisioned by Eleanor Roosevelt with a simplicity that might be envied by the legislators who had to pore through President Clinton's 262-page bill for national service. Times were simpler then. The act authorizing the CCC occupied only two pages.

A conference this writer convened in May 1966 made the front page of *The New York Times* and stimulated considerable debate on national service as a way to make the draft more equitable. A conference summary, background papers, and an annotated bibliography are found in *A Profile of National Service* by the National Service Conference and edited by this writer.

Marion Sanders, a participant in that 1966 conference, caused joy in the White House and elsewhere, with "The Case for a National Service Corps" that was published in *The New York Times Magazine* of August 7, 1966. There was hope that national service might offer President Lyndon Johnson an opportunity to disengage honorably from Vietnam by mobilizing young people for the declared War on Poverty rather than the undeclared war in Vietnam. President Johnson, who had introduced a national service bill 25 years earlier as a young congressman from Texas, flirted with the idea for several months before deciding to escalate the Vietnam War and leave the War on Poverty in relative neglect.

Gardeners may be surprised to learn that Liberty Hyde Bailey, the famed horticulturist, was a proponent of national service. In *Universal Service*, Bailey flavors his case with sound bites that could be used in today's media, to wit, "If any man is his brother's keeper, he cannot delegate the responsibility" (p.92), and "Universal voluntary service is the basis of mature democracy" (p. 97).

There is even a work of fiction. In "When the Earth Trembled," Richard J. Walsh built on William James's moral equivalent theme to postulate an American Secretary of War directing a nonmilitary army against natural enemies such as disease and natural disasters.

And there is a videotape. *The National Service Alternative*, produced by the National Service Secretariat and directed by Robin Noonan, recalls the words of William James, shows CCC enrollees and Peace Corps Volunteers at work, and portrays a vision for future national service remarkably akin to that emerging from the Clinton administration.

In recent years I have heard from graduate students in fields as varied as religion, economics, political science, sociology, and education, who are working on dissertations in the area of national service. On the basis of their work, we may expect to see more books on national service in the not-too-distant future.

Donald J. Eberly is founder and executive director of the National Service Secretariat in Washington, D.C. He was drafted and served in the U.S. Army. He later did civilian national service in Nigeria. His 1958 proposal on national service was one of the sources of Senator Hubert Humphrey's Peace Corps legislation of 1960.

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