

# Inquiring Minds Topic – 7 February 2020

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## Universal (Military) Service

In several of our discussions the notion that the youth of our country could benefit from a required public service has been raised. One goal would be to expose each of our youth to some of the diversity of our population. Another goal would be to give each of them an opportunity to make a contribution about which each could feel proud.

What are some of the factors to consider. First, would it be mandatory for everyone? When would it be imposed, for instance, on the eighteenth birthday of each person?

Should there be any excuses? What about disability, either physical or mental? What about flat feet or cerebral palsy? What about education, such as medical training? What about important jobs such as service in a police or fire department?

How many people are we considering? According to Quora it is approximately 4,015,000 each year. Our military services have approximately 1,400,000 personal. That includes all ranks and of course there is a need for skilled people who are retained many years. The military could not absorb all of these people.

Where else could they go? Could a new conservation corps absorb them? A peace corps? A WPA? Any ideas?

If we don't take everyone, then what. In 1961 when I received the invitation I could not refuse to join the Army I had enjoyed an academic deferment for long enough to complete law school. I was old by draftee standards and not very fit. I don't think the Army really wanted me. However my number came up. That situation left the majority of the eligible people not included in the experience of military service. Not long after I was drafted the Army set out to become a volunteer service. I viewed my service as a form of taxation. Like most taxation it was not levied fairly across the population!

If we are dealing with social policy we should take everyone. What would it cost? How would it be paid for? If some people were not taken, what psychological problems would be faced by anyone not included?

Could we achieve the goals of universal service by education in civics? How could we include everybody so as to meet some of the goals I hope we will have discussed.