

Abolish Slavery!

Part I

Any current drive for the abolition of slavery would only draw apathetic shrugs from the American public. Wasn't slavery abolished in the United States over a century ago, and aren't the only remaining signs of it confined to such backward countries as Yemen and Saudi Arabia? The answer is emphatically, No! and we shall be devoting a series of columns to pointing out the vast amount of slavery that still exists — unheeded and accepted — in the good old US of A. As in all cases of slavery, they cry out for abolition, but so far few if any voices have been raised to take up that noble cry.

The outstanding example of slavery still existing in the United States is, of course, the draft. A century ago Americans added the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished involuntary servitude. If the draft isn't involuntary servitude, it is hard to know how that term can be defined, and yet no part of the American judicial system has bothered to bring the servitude of conscription under the rubric of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Almost everyone admits that the current operations of the draft system are absurd and inequitable, in which some young men are grabbed while other go permanently free. To correct this kind of inequity of oppression, there are two directions in which we can move: draft everyone,

or abolish the draft altogether. This idea that if some are drafted then all should feel the yoke is tantamount to saying, in the days of Negro slavery, (a) that if one slave manages to run away, he should be dragged back to slavery in order to be “fair” to his fellow victims, and (b) that everyone in the society should be enslaved equally. The libertarian, in contrast, wants everyone to be free of either the draft or old-style slavery, but he cheers when anyone is able to escape the monstrous yoke. The “draft-everyone” school of egalitarians, furthermore, can never succeed in their aim of imposing compulsory uniformity on all. Because even if everyone is drafted for “national service,” a state that Secretaries [Robert S.] McNamara and [W. Willard] Wirtz may be aiming for, only a small number will be sent to the front lines of military service; others will have to grow food, produce equipment, man the supply lines, etc. So any attempt to impose equality of condition violates the nature of the world and must fail.

The rational course, therefore, is to cheer when anyone escapes the draft and to call for its abolition, not to try to make everyone suffer “equally.” The only equality that can be achieved in the world, hence the only rational concept of equality, is equality in liberty.