

Activist asks if Obama might bring back draft

Patrick O'Neill | Nov. 29, 2008

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While the election of Barack Obama has been welcome news to many peace and social justice activists, anti-military recruitment activist, Bill Galvin says an Obama presidency does not guarantee a smaller military, and Obama could push for a national service law that would require young adults to participate in volunteer programs that would include military service.

"Obama has said things like, 'If we're going to go to war, we should all share in the burden,' and that is traditionally kind of a code word or a euphemism for 'Maybe we ought to look at a draft,'" said Galvin, the counseling coordinator at The Center on Conscience & War in Washington, DC.

Galvin spoke with *NCR* as he stood in the middle of Benning Rd. handing out postcards to promote "Soldiers of Conscience," a documentary film Galvin screened at the SOAW gathering.

"That's not to say (Obama's) advocated for bringing back a draft. but we think that there are some things to be worried about," said Galvin, who promotes the Center every year at the SOAW gathering. "Clearly his chief of staff has a very clear vision of a mandatory national service program and to what degree that seeps its way into the Obama agenda, we don't know at this point.

"But I don't think the draft's about to come back; I'm not saying that. But I don't think that Obama getting elected means we don't have to worry about it."

Galvin said any national service program will give preferential treatment, and better incentives, to those who join the military.

"All the programs I have seen talk about a national service that's not a military service, but it could be in the military, it could be AmeriCorps, it could be Peace Corps, (but) people who opt for military service get better benefits under all of these programs.

"I think it's important that we look at what our government spends and where the priorities really are because our government really isn't about funding the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps big time or they would. All the money goes to the Pentagon. So if you have this mandatory service program it's pretty clear to me what it's really all about."

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