



Selective Service Quietly Setting Up Flint Draft Board

By Doug Cunningham

Kent Kirby is a quietly intense, physically fit guy in his forties. He exudes strong, silent qualities. Everything about him is reassuring. Until you find out that he works for Selective Service.

Kirby was in Flint recently interviewing people for local draft boards. He lives near Lansing. He's in the National Guard. He has kids who are draft age.

Wait a minute! Draft boards? There's no draft. Is there?

That's what Selective Service keeps saying. There is no draft and there will be no draft. We're just getting ready for a national emergency. Just in case we ever need some warm, young bodies, we

want to make sure we can deliver the meat.

It's being called "total reactivation" by Selective Service. All over the country people are being recruited to serve on local draft boards. Those boards will have the power to decide individual exemption cases should the draft be revived.

Mr. Kirby was very clear about one thing when I talked to him. He doesn't believe the draft will come back—unless there's a "national emergency." When I asked him if a war in El Salvador could be construed as such an emergency, he acknowledged that it could.

But he repeatedly stressed that there are no plans he knows of to actually reinstate induction. He was in town just to interview potential draft board members. He said he was looking for people

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who were neither pro-draft or anti-draft. "I've talked to all kinds of people," Kirby said, "from bank presidents to janitors, who want to be on the local boards."

Kirby told me he had interviewed at least forty-two people, and although he wouldn't give me a breakdown of sex, age, and race, he did say there was what he called a "good cross-section of people from all walks of life" represented.

When I raised the issue of previous draft boards having been predominantly old, male and white, he said that will be avoided this time.

Draft board members get twelve hours training before they're sworn in. They then have to make complex decisions about moral and religious convictions of young men threatened with forced military service.

Kirby noted that no matter how anti-draft somebody on a local draft board may be, they still wouldn't have much impact if they tried to stop the draft. He said if they kept granting deferments, new numbers in the draft lottery would be drawn and somebody would end up being drafted anyway.

"There's no reason we can't have blacks or other minorities on the boards," Kirby said, "or women or young people. In fact, I hope we do."

There's one other thing Kirby kept stressing. Registration. He said a lot of young people don't realize that there's continuous registration now. Men are required to register on their eighteenth birthday.

He said failure to register is a felony. He wanted to make sure I included that in this article.

During the entire conversation about the interviews for local draft boards, Kirby never mentioned his personal views on forced military service. There was no discussion about the philosophical implications of his work.

Kent Kirby was just doing his job.



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