

“If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies, and so a man.” *Henry David Thoreau*

# THE NEW DRAFT RESISTERS

BY DAVID BRISSON

**E**D HASBROUCK is a most unlikely hero. Perhaps he is no hero at all. Neither cherubic nor statuesque, Ed is wiry thin and admittedly uneasy. With fly-away red hair, sometimes harnessed in a ponytail, Ed looks like the consummate student protester of the sixties. But don't be fooled. Though an outspoken revolutionary in spirit, Ed is a 1980s individualist—a self-proclaimed anarchist so esoteric that even those who sympathize with him find him difficult to understand. Above all, Ed insists on being himself.

At 23, Ed stands in staunch defiance of the United States government. Like 500,000 to 800,000 other young American men bred on Watergate and Vietnam, he has stood up to the Selective Service and said no to draft registration. Risking five years in prison plus a \$10,000 fine to protect his inalienable rights, Ed has chosen Thoreau's course of civil disobedience. And whether you deem him a patriot or a fool, he is neither without precedent nor alone.

“A generation has grown up that has no religious faith in authority,” contends Ed. “It's the difference between older reporters who ask me, ‘Why didn't you register?’ and people my own age whose intuitive response is, ‘Why should we?’”

Contributing editor DAVID BRISSON most recently wrote on the plight of Texas prison inmate Neil Scott for *EWJ*.



*Ed Hasbrouck—hero or fool?*

“The government of the United States was created by civil disobedience, by traitors to the legitimate authority of that time. It was created by people who were resisting, among other things, a British system of conscription.”

One of thirteen resisters indicted by the federal government thus far, Ed is the only one to have offered no plea and no defense. At his arraignment in Boston last October, Ed shocked the courtroom by refusing to rise for the magistrate. “If you would like to stand, we can both talk standing up,” he told her. Later, when asked to take an oath with his right hand, he said he preferred to use his left, because, as a lefty, it had more meaning.

“I do not feel I have done anything for which I owe the government explanation,” the former University of Chicago political science major told the court. “They owe me explanation of why I should sign my life over to them to

do what they wish.”

Like Ed, most concerned observers were stunned when President Reagan announced in January 1982 that he would continue to have eighteen-year-old males send their names, social security numbers, and addresses to the Selective Service. During the 1980 campaign, in words Ed Hasbrouck might have uttered, candidate Reagan claimed that his “most fundamental objection to draft registration is moral.” The President said that in any other time than the most “severe national emergency... a draft or draft registration destroys the very values that our society is committed to defending.”

Perhaps, in Reagan's mind, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and Soviet-sanctioned martial law in Poland constituted such a crisis. But, publicly, the president failed to mention them. Premising his decision on a 1980 Selective Service study drawn up for President Carter, Reagan claimed registration would save America six weeks in mobilizing emergency manpower. He told no one that the report's original conclusion was that only one week would be saved. Carter administration pressure had overturned that original conclusion.

While several hundred thousand spirits sagged, others winced. Fears of a foray into Central America or a Soviet-American nuclear showdown exacerbated the Vietnam-ridden nightmares of registration's opponents. As anti-draft groups across the country planned demonstrations in 100 cities, teams of lawyers from organizations such as the National Lawyers Guild prepared defenses for potential indictees. Mean-