
Defense Report

AUSA



Quality vs. Quantity— How Soon We Forget

The proper memory for a politician is one that knows what to remember and what to forget.

John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn *Recollections* (1917)

Concern about the future of the All Volunteer Force is well-justified. Manning the force in an atmosphere of shrinking manpower resources and an improving economy is proving to be difficult and expensive. Recommendations for maintaining a high quality, fully-manned force by resorting to selective service are already being heard.

But at the same time we also hear that the volunteer concept can be *made* to work. The Senate Appropriations Committee has recently declared that the idea would continue to work if only those stubborn military people would relax *just a little* on their standards.

The services are having great success recruiting women. "Why not use more of them?" the committee asks. Why discharge so many people who cannot make the grade during basic training? Why not replace more military people with civilians? Why not lower recruiting standards to accept more non-high school graduates? Why not relax physical standards and take the skinny and the obese? The committee thinks all these things should be done.

The services might use more women, particularly if Congress and the American people decide they should be used in combat situations. But the committee's own report says, "The Committee is not in a position of endorsing the opening of front line combat positions to women."

The committee forgets it was Congress that told the services to weed out marginal performers before they accumulated enough service to be entitled to full veterans benefits.

The committee forgets that civilian employees do not deploy into combat and there must be trained military people to do the same jobs.

The committee forgets the recent problems of the Marine Corps when lowered recruiting standards brought Congressional complaints about high absence and misconduct rates.

The committee forgets that every physically questionable recruit taken in becomes a potential medical problem, a likely early training failure and a long-term public medical burden.

What the committee is saying lacks the insight easily gained from a short glance back into its own committee reports and, with a little more effort perhaps, back to hearings held by the Senate Armed Services Committee hardly six months ago.

The time has come to remember what is painful and to forget what is expedient.