



“Isn't it amazing how, once started, a government program never goes away, no matter how useless it turns out to be?” by mel griffith

Isn't it amazing how, once started, a government program never goes away, no matter how useless it turns out to be?

The legislature is in the process of repealing a requirement that gun dealers get a thumb print of gun buyers. This requirement, passed in 1998, was apparently intended to provide prints for use in criminal investigations.

In the ten year life of this law, 2.3 million prints have been taken. How many have actually been needed? A grand total of one. That one turned out to be smudged and unusable which is probably

true of many others, since they were taken by untrained people.

Why did it take ten years for somebody to figure out that this was a useless program? Why didn't somebody notice after three or four years that nobody was using the information? How much taxpayers' money was wasted filing and preserving all those prints? How much private money was wasted

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on fingerprint supplies to take prints that served no purpose?

Unbelievably, after it was established that this program was completely unneeded, one legislator wanted to continue it anyway and waste more

money training gun dealers to take better fingerprints, so the prints nobody needed would be better quality. If there is an award for dumbest legislator, he must have locked up.

And speaking of dumb ideas, I frequently hear radio ads urging young men to register for the military draft. What draft? The draft was abolished in 1974, over thirty-four years ago. It's never going to return for lots of good reasons, like the following: The military fights wars much

better when it isn't clogged with hordes of unmotivated, untalented, and unwilling folks. Comparing the way the military worked in Vietnam with its performance in wars since, makes this quite clear. Modern war-

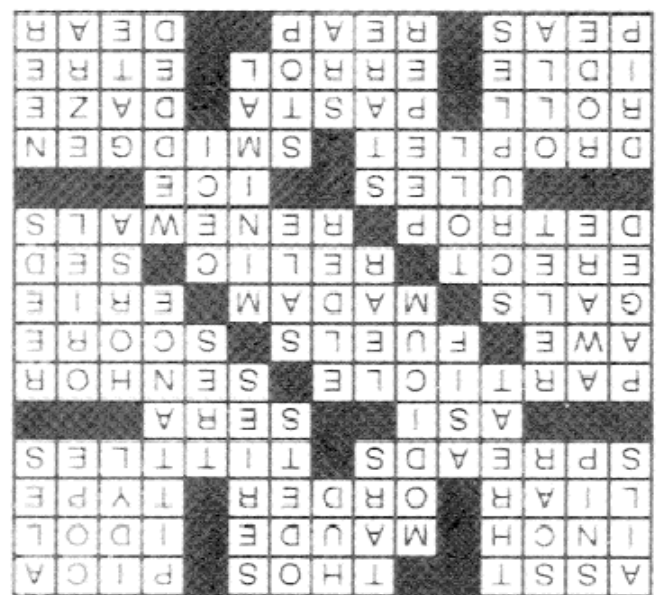
fare is just too complicated for amateurs with six months training. It requires trained professionals with experience. Despite all the predictions of disaster before the draft was abolished, things worked much better without it. It has proved quite possible to recruit all the manpower (and woman power) needed on a volunteer basis, even in times of war. All that was needed was to pay folks adequately and treat them decently, neither of which was being done very well when there was an unlimited supply of forced labor.

Why on earth are we wasting money registering people for a non existent draft? And why are we wasting radio airtime encouraging people to do something that doesn't need to be done? It appears that government just

can't bear to give up any regulation, no matter how useless. Chances are that there are hundreds of equally useless programs with bureaucrats plodding away at them at our expense. They just don't come to our attention.

- Mel Griffith raises cattle and chickens on his farm in the southern part of the county. He is the 6th District member of the Bradley County Commission. He also serves on the Bradley County Planning Commission.

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