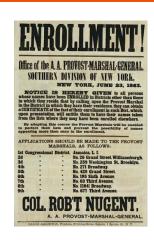
## 1863 DRAFT LAW



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When the U.S. Federal Government passed a Draft Law, in 1863, people were extremely upset at the unfair aspects of the law. Also referred to as "Enrollment," the conscription act allowed wealthy men to "dodge the draft" by paying the sum of \$300—equivalent to more than \$6,000 in 2018—for someone else to take their place. This recruiting poster, released by the U.S. Army, advises men in New York about the enrollment. It was printed by Baker & Goodwin on or about June 23, 1863.

By 1863, the United States was embroiled in a <u>war between the states</u> that killed more Americans than any other war. Six hundred thousand people died; another million were seriously injured.

As the Union ran short of manpower, Congress passed a Conscription Act. The draft law, however, was inherently unfair since it <u>gave wealthy men a way to avoid service</u>. As the country was falling apart, Washington politicians unwittingly set the stage for New York City to fall apart as well.

People everywhere were concerned that the Conscription Law was extremely <u>unfair</u>. It put the "whole <u>sacrifice</u> of life, limb, health, home" upon the "poor and laboring classes who have the least at stake in the preservation of the Union." Men who could afford it would be able to buy their way out of service by paying \$300. Joseph Medill (later Mayor of Chicago) also <u>noted</u>, in his 5 March 1863 letter to <u>Horace White</u> (later a famous journalist), that:

There is no possible defense, justification or apology that can be made for this outrage.

As Washington lawmakers decided what to do about recruiting more men to fight for the Union, opposition to the law poured in from around the Union. Various members of Congress (like <u>Schuyler Colfax</u>) expressed their <u>opinions</u> to the President. Knowing the Conscription Law would cause controversy and resistance, people gave President Lincoln ideas on how to make the law more palatable.

The President himself, needing men to fight the war, expressed his <u>opinion</u> that the law was necessary—and he would see to it that the "<u>draft law</u>" was "faithfully executed."

In the summer of 1863, New York City erupted in protest.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/1863-DRAFT-LAW-Gangs-of-New-York

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/1863-DRAFT-LAW-Gangs-of-New-York