

Veterans Groups Stick To Hard Line on Amnesty

St. Chronicle

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Ford to Join Press club

Washington

Why Ford Broke Amnesty News at VFW Convention

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Chicago

The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars said yesterday the group's 1.8 million members remain opposed to any type of amnesty for those who refused to serve in the Vietnam war.

Commander Ray Soden said the VFW may find itself "at odds" with President Ford on the issue if he calls for conditional amnesty. Soden was interviewed after Mr. Ford told the VFW convention he is prepared to consider conditional amnesty.

A Deserter in Canada Blasts Ford Proposal

Toronto

A San Mateo man who deserted the U.S. Army in 1968 said yesterday that President Ford's proposal of conditional amnesty was "totally unacceptable."

Gerry Condon, 27, has lived in exile in Sweden and Canada since he went over the hill in 1968.

He currently is managing editor of Amex, a magazine for American exiles in Canada. Their numbers are estimated at between 20,000 and 25,000.

United Press

"I think we would ask for congressional hearings on this," Soden said. "Our position is based on the fact that the law has been broken, and if they want to come back, let them face the judicial system of this country."

Soden said he thinks amnesty for draft evaders will be tied to the question of amnesty for former President Richard Nixon if the issue comes before Congress, and he repeated the VFW's opposition to amnesty for the former president.

"I think there can be no difference in our system for bugging in or bugging out," he said.

In Miami Beach, the American Legion said it is opposed to blanket amnesty or executive clemency.

Legion national commander Robert E. L. Eaton said amnesty is a matter for the courts, not the President or Congress.

"He (Mr. Ford) can't pass a law to give somebody forgiveness for something he did when he violated the law. That's the court's prob-

President Ford has applied for associate membership in the National Press Club to further his aim of improving White House relations with the press, club sources said yesterday.

Ford's application, dated August 13, was forwarded for consideration by the next meeting of the membership committee.

United Press

len, and amnesty has to be in the form of clemency from the executive branch," Eaton said.

In Hollywood, Fla., the national commander of the 250,000-member Amvets organization of World War II, Korea and Vietnam veterans said he favors allowing the courts to decide on amnesty.

United Press

Washington
President Ford told reporters aboard Air Force One returning to the White House yesterday why he had decided to propose a conditional amnesty for draft resisters in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Chicago.

Mr. Ford said that "five or six people in the Cabinet, in my staff, and others said to me last week at some point, 'We have to do something about this.'"

"The more I thought of it, the more I thought that the right audience would be an audience that might be difficult rather than some hand-picked audience.

"It's better to talk to people who have some understanding. It would have been a little cowardice, I think, if I'd picked an audience that was ecstatic."

"You can't talk about

healing unless you are going to use it in the broadest context," Mr. Ford said. Asked whether he is going to propose some sort of alternative service, he said, "I'm not going beyond the language that I used — 'work their way back' — earned return. The details of that will have to be reflected in what Attorney General Bill Saxbe and Defense Secretary Jim Schlesinger work out."

Mr. Ford told reporters that he thought the VFW audience was "very understanding" when he proposed some kind of leniency toward Vietnam war draft dodgers.

"We carefully chose our words," he said. "They were very respectful. I was a little apprehensive that the worst would happen, but they were very nice."

Of his decision to propose

Washington Post