

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blame for Vietnam

Editor — President Ford's stand on amnesty must be totally rejected, for it implies that those who refused to participate in the Vietnam war are criminals who must be punished before they are allowed to return. In fact, these individuals and even more those who went to prison rather than serve in Vietnam, should be given a hero's welcome in every major city for their personal morality and courage.

It was this group of individuals, along with all Americans who consistently opposed the war, that represented the highest ideals of this nation, and not those who, like then Congressman Ford supported every escalation of this most disgraceful and barbaric war in American history.

If anyone is to be punished for Vietnam, let it be the ones who prosecuted the war, not those who refused to be a part of it.

DOUGLAS MATTERN
Palo Alto.

It Wouldn't Heal

Editor — My colleagues and I share your relief at President Ford's amnesty initiative. We believe, however, that your editorial's closing words reflect an assumption about conditional amnesty which, if embodied in public policy, would wreck the initiative and any chance of using it as a device to heal the nation's political divisions.

I refer to the notion that some kind of service to the nation be considered a form of "expiation and contrition." This misses the point that many Americans, and particularly those who refused to fight in Vietnam, continue to believe strongly that they were morally and politically right and that the government and the majority were wrong. This segment of our political community will not accept, nor have their anger banked by, an amnesty that requires expiation.

We take another tack. As

American citizens, we all have obligations to this political community. The young men who fled chose, for a variety of reasons (including reasons of conscience), to avoid an obligation. We may agree or disagree with their judgment about the Vietnam war; we may recognize or deny the validity of their reasons for evading their responsibility.

But the purpose of an amnesty should not be to determine who was right and who was wrong. Rather, it should provide a way for those who wish to re-enter this society as responsible citizens to demonstrate their willingness to accept the obligations of citizenship. Let us not cloud this opportunity to heal our nation's wounds with the stigma of guilt suggested by the words "expiation and contrition." Instead, let us make the most of this opportunity to reaffirm respect for both conscience and law.

EUGENE B. MIHALY,
chairman
World Without War
Issues Center

Berkeley.

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Editor — Even if one grants that the Vietnam war was illegal and immoral, I am wholly against amnesty for those who fled the country in order to avoid confronting the issue on any terms. Back then we had four alternatives:

- The armed forces — a mistake which many paid for with loss of life, limbs, health and peace of mind. It was an exorbitant price for the delusion of serving your country.

- Serve your country as a conscientious objector and work to inform others of the true nature of the Southeast Asian conflict.

- Serve your country by going jail for two years or probably less, an eloquent self-evident and moving form of protest and much more safe and comfortable than a combat tour in Vietnam as part of a two-year hitch that could put one

in his grave, a bug cell or a hospital ward forever.

- Desert your country entirely when you are most needed because you know the situation for what it is. Let your less wealthy, less educated fellow citizen be gulled, turned into cannon fodder and given a body bag to carry around while you backpack through Europe.

There was no honorable motive in deserting. They either knew the situation and didn't care, or they didn't know but were scared. In a time of national crisis these men were selfish or cowardly or both. I see no other possible explanation for that particular behavior. Therefore I am without qualm in now asserting my own interests and those of my class. If one such draft evader should find work in this job-short country before the last unemployed veteran it would be in my view a capital crime.

FRANK AMBROSE
San Francisco.

Wondering

Editor — I can't help wondering just how many of those so vehemently opposed to Vietnam draft evader amnesty are the same people who allowed, encouraged and even financed their own sons to take Mickey Mouse courses in college for the express purpose of avoiding the draft.

JACK R. WALLIS
Menlo Park.

What The Book Says

Editor — The whole controversy over whether women should be allowed in the priesthood could be easily cleared up by checking the source of God's word, the Bible.

The passages which I feel clear this up are I Timothy 2: 11-12: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection," and I Saint Paul: "Permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent."

MATTHEW M. PEASE
Walnut Creek.