

Two-Thirds Out of Clemency

By Jerry T. Baulch

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Two-thirds of the deserters who joined President Ford's clemency job program have dropped out, been kicked out, or been processed out by the military without reporting for jobs and will escape punishment without completing their assigned work.

Of 4,503 deserters who joined the program, 2,035 have dropped out or been kicked out, the Selective Service says. About 1,000 men processed out by the military never reported for jobs, the Defense Department says.

The deserters are no longer under military control because they were given discharges, and this will enable them to escape punishment for desertion without completing the work they were assigned under the program.

About 7,000 deserters never tried to get into the program. These include many persons who fled the country and could be punished if apprehended.

Selective Service officials said the 2,035 "were terminated for nonperformance, for lack of cooperation and because they chose not to fulfill their agreements in many cases." Some with families dropped out because they couldn't make a go of it on the low pay.

"Even though we didn't get the numbers we anticipated, President Ford has attained more of his initial goal than lots of people give him credit for," said Selective Service Director Byron V. Pepitone.

In addition to deserters, the clemency program is for draft dodgers. Of the 5,355 persons processed in the three-part program, 2,879 have taken jobs.

Unpunished deserters were handled by the Defense Department; unpunished draft dodgers by the Justice Department. Both of these parts of the program have been completed. Men convicted of draft dodging or being punished for desertion are handled by the Presidential Clemency Board. This part of the program is unfinished.

The clemency board had the most applicants — 21,000. It has until Sept. 15 to complete

its work. It has found nearly 6,000 applicants ineligible, recommended pardons for about 6,000 others, recommended pardons conditioned on a work period for about 6,000 more and denied pardons to about 700.

Only 130 men processed by the board have reported for jobs because most of the 6,000 so designated are awaiting concurrence by the President or are within the 30-day deadline for reporting. Seven have completed their job assignments.

Board Chairman Charles E. Goodell said "it is too early to tell" how many who signed with the board intend to per-

form jobs, although all agreed to do so when they applied.

The Justice Department portion of the program has a low dropout rate—19 of 722. Those who don't complete their jobs can be prosecuted for draft evasion. Some of the dropouts have fled the country to avoid prosecution.

So far, 52 persons in the Department of Defense portion of the program and 10 under the Department of Justice portion have completed job assignments. The work periods average 20 months.

The Selective Service, in giving examples of men who have benefitted from the program, said it could not give names in

order to protect individual privacy. Most are wounded, decorated Vietnam veterans.

One is a former Marine in a southern state who started the program as a jailer's assistant and fit in so well he was sent to school on his own time and is now a sheriff's deputy.

Another veteran served as a food service worker in a state hospital in the West. His supervisor wrote the Selective Service that he wanted more employees like him.

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One soldier who served in Vietnam is working as a "jack of all trades" in a rest home. "He enjoys his work and plans

Job Plan

to remain on the job after his service is finished," a Selective Service report said. "This man has only a seventh-grade education and has had trouble getting and keeping jobs."

A man in New York State, a wounded veteran, works with mentally retarded children "and is considering taking further training so as to be better equipped to help his wards even more," the report said.

Another Army veteran is working in an East Coast city as a rodent and insect control inspector for the health department. His supervisor hopes to keep him after his term is up, the Selective Service said.