

Exiles in Canada Wary of Amnesty Bill

By JAY WALZ

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OTTAWA, Jan. 10—Americans who fled here to avoid service in Vietnam, already uncertain because of the difficulty of finding jobs, have a new quandary: whether to return home if Congress approved an amnesty. And the proposal itself appears to be making jobs harder to find.

The very idea, implicit in the amnesty concept of acknowledging that they were in the wrong is repugnant to many of the draft resisters even though they may be pounding doors to find jobs in a country where the unemployment rate—6.5 per cent—is higher than it is at home.

"I would never go back under the terms of the Taft bill," Richard Gooding, a 25-year-old former New Yorker, said in an interview. He was referring to a measure proposed by Senator Robert Taft Jr., Republican of Ohio, that amnesty be offered to draft-dodgers—but not deserters—who on being freed from prison or on returning home from exile, volunteer to give alternative service as non-combatants or in civilian Federal activities. Congress is expected to follow President Nixon's lead and put the question of until the war is over.

Mr. Gooding, who came to Montreal in August, 1970, after, he says, "a year of evading the draft in the United States," is working with the Montreal Council to Aid War Resisters, which gets some support from the World Council of Churches.

'I Did What I Had to Do'

In Toronto, Warren Frederick, 24, formerly of Johnstown, Pa., who left the United States Air Force in 1969 and has a job as a meteorologist for a radio station, said: "I don't think I did anything wrong. I did what I had to do.

Many others of the 50,000 to 70,000 resisters in Canada are not fortunate where jobs are concerned. The various aid centers, from Montreal to Vancouver, for three years have offered shelter, food and job-hunting help are now discouraging flight to Canada. Most aid centers refuse help unless the applicant faces indictment or is threatened with "the brig or jail."

"We definitely advise draft evaders and deserters to exhaust all alternatives before leaving the United States," said Richard Brown of the Toronto Anti-Draft Program.

The employment situation has provoked bitterness against Americans.

"Canadians resent having to compete for jobs against almost 70,000 young Americans

—dodgers, deserters, wives and girl friends—who have come to this country in the last five or six years," said Daniel Zimmerman, a 22-year-old former New Yorker who tries to help exiles in Toronto.

Canadian employers, the exile groups report, stiffened perceptibly after President Nixon imposed a 10 per cent surcharge on imports last fall. The surcharge has been lifted, but businessmen know their Government faces hard bargaining with the United States on a number of important trade issues.

"And if Canadian employers don't like to take us," an American remarked, "you can imagine the prejudice against us in the American-controlled branch plants."

The job obstacles are increasing as potential employers learn that an amnesty has been suggested. "If the young Yanks can go home, may God speed them," a businessman said.

'Commies and Pinkos'

The employers' lack of sympathy, some resisters complain, is encouraged by speeches by leaders of Canadian veterans labeling them as "Commies and pinkos who won't fight for their country, or ours either."

Robert Gardner, coordinator of the Canadian Council of Churches' ministry to draft-age immigrants from the United States, criticizes American newspapers and broadcasters for portraying the dodgers and deserters as "poor, sad, lonely exiles. Many, he said in an interview, have done no more than what they consider to be morally right and most are finding new and successful lives.

The more recent exiles, on the whole, are more reluctant to be interviewed than those

who came here confidently two or three years ago.

Ross, 22, declined to give his family name when questioned at the Toronto Anti-Draft Program. He went there 18 months ago after deserting from the Marine Corps but has not found a job. Not long ago the police charged him with possession of marijuana, he related, and he had not decided whether to show up for trial for fear he could be deported.

Rod, 22, from North Carolina, went to Toronto "impulsively" because he "got fed up with the Air Force." He wants to stay but is "scared to death" to apply for the papers required before he can get work.

James Wilcox, a Detroit-born professor at Carleton University, Ottawa, told a reporter he thought few of the exiles he encountered as students wanted to return home. "Even if amnesty were honest they would never go back now," he said. "But to them any amnesty requiring them to admit they've been naughty is either a joke or an insult."

As many as 40,000 exiles, more than half of the total, are in Toronto, the favorite haven, and some 10,000 may be in Montreal.

If exiles having second thoughts are returning home whatever the consequences, none of those remaining seem to know, and the Canadian Government has no record of them.

"To us this type of person just doesn't exist," said a spokesman at the Department of Manpower and Immigration. "We don't ask prospective immigrants about their military status no matter where they come from. We don't know who are dodgers or deserters, and we don't care."