

Pardon Sparks New Calls for Viet Amnesty

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Proponents of all-out amnesty for Vietnam war resisters and deserters seized upon the Nixon pardon issue yesterday to renew their calls for unconditional clemency.

The calls came as President Ford, saying he has been too busy with the Nixon case to concentrate on the war amnesty, postponed indefinitely release of his final plan of "earned re-entry" for fugitive draft violators and military deserters.

The plan had been scheduled for announcement today. Spokesmen for several amnesty groups said they planned to use the additional time to restate their case, with emphasis on the question of equal treatment for law violators.

"There's been a real change in the ball game because of this action," said Warren Hoover, director of the National Interreligious Service Board, an amalgam of religious organizations working on matters of the war and individual conscience.

Hoover said most amnesty proponents had not called for prosecution of former President Nixon and were not calling for it now. But the pardon issued Sunday "does seem to call for a reassessment by the President," he said.

Henry Schwarzschild, director of the American Civil Liberties Union amnesty project, said, "We welcome the postponement, unless of course it becomes an indefinite postponement and the President buries the issue."

"This gives us more time to seek reconsideration of some notions that apparently have been submitted to the President," Schwarzschild said.

The proposals include case-by-case handling of applications for leniency rather than categorical amnesty, a requirement of "alternative service" in exchange for lenient treatment and some form of oath or "restatement of allegiance" to the United States.

Amnesty advocates say such strings on the clemency program would make it unacceptable and thus an empty gesture for the war's opponents, who would question the fairness of an administrative body and do not feel their actions were unpatriotic.

Asked whether the limited admission by Mr. Nixon that he had made "mistakes over Watergate" was the kind of statement that should be required of returning fugitives, Hoover said it would be wrong to demand such admissions.

Besides, said Hoover, "The White House was quite emphatic in saying that Mr. Nixon did not have to say anything" as a condition of being pardoned for any crimes he may have committed as President.

Also seeing a connection between clemency for Mr. Nixon and for war fugitives was the conservative Young Americans for Freedom, which opposes leniency in both cases.

Speaking of the Nixon pardon, YAF executive director Ronald F. Docksai said, "I hope this is not a forerunner of the President's policy on amnesty for draft-dodgers and deserters. It would be ironic if Nixon, the most visible opponent of unconditional amnesty, would be responsible for its implementation."