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Hi..

Well poor old Henry didn't

have a very good turnout - only 6 media folk turned out. no wire services and no major radio - only national public radio. Boston Globe and L.A. Times only newspapers represented.

The only comment that was notable was that Henry called upon the media to exercise whatever power they had to insure that the Pardon Attorney and the Justice Dept. did not re-review the cases the PCB has already made recommendations on but to let them go on to the President as currently recommended.

His attacks on General Walt also helped us.

Mrs. Ransom was pitiful in her remarks as the allegations she made were not backed up by facts and she was constantly caught and Henry kept trying to rescue her but, of course, it is sad as she said that her son would have been 31 years old yesterday

had he not been killed in VietNam
7 years ago. Her back-up on
the Gold Star parents being for
Unconditional Amnesty was challenged
by one reporter and she had to
back down and both she and Henry
had to admit there was very little
support from them for Amnesty.

Henry said Kastenmeir's bill
was not the best of both worlds
but better than nothing. You
will note they have attached
a supposed NCAAU Bill and
compared it with HR 9596.

I almost felt sorry for Henry
because their comments were so
pitifully inane and carried no
impact or solid support of any
kind.

Hope to see you soon - meanwhile
best of all to you.

Nia 790=0275

ACLU NEWS

American Civil Liberties Union • 22 East 40th Street • New York, New York 10016

Edward J. Ennis, Chairperson, Board of Directors • Ramsey Clark, Chairperson, National Advisory Council • Aryeh Neier, Executive Director.

For information contact Trudi Schutz, Press Director

Telephone day: (212) 725-1222 night: 725-1473 home: 799-9258

Wetter Wire Service Present

Public Radio there

Boston Globe there

L.A. Times - David Lamb

6 media Reps. in all

no TV

October 3, 1975

Statement of

Henry Schwarzschild,
Director, Project on Amnesty,
American Civil Liberties Union,

on the
Presidential Clemency Program and Amnesty



The Presidential Clemency Program excluded from eligibility most of the 750,000-or-more people who need a post-Vietnam amnesty; it attracted less than 15% of those who were eligible; it offered to most of them useless and falsely advertised remedies in exchange for hurtful and demeaning conditions.

This is the program that has been accused by four former Presidential Clemency Board members of cynically selling out to an amnesty orientation and defended by the other fourteen members as having healed the wounds of a very difficult and trying time in America's history.

The American Civil Liberties Union, in union with the amnesty movement and the war resisters, submits that neither attacks on the late Clemency Program from professional warriors nor self-serving praise for it from its administrators can transform that failure of a clemency into a decent or successful amnesty. The Presidential Clemency Board "minority" of four has little to worry about; the majority of fourteen are entitled to no pride of achievement. In the Ford Clemency Board, 4 plus 13 equals 0.

There has been no amnesty, there has been no healing of wounds, there has been no reconciliation after the terrible divisions that the war caused in our country. Tens of thousands of young men and women who resisted the draft or the brutalization and racism of the

military, who were subjected to court-martial and military discharge practices of established lawlessness and inhumanity and were cashiered out of the military with lifelong stigmas and disabilities, or who fought at home against the destructive ten-year war, continue to bear profound wounds. In turning away from the war, we continue to make the veterans and the war resisters the principal, the only, bearers of the burdens of the Vietnam War, while the Westmorelands and McNamaras and Kissingers have their jobs and pensions and their undiminished arrogance. And their amnesty, too.

The Clemency Program was a failure in its conception, inasmuch as it insisted upon establishing that those who refused to participate in the war in Southeast Asia were the criminals of the Vietnam era while at the same time claiming to reduce their punishment. The Clemency Program was a failure in its design, since it made ineligible for clemency the overwhelming majority of those who need amnesty, while offering useless remedies under demeaning conditions to the rest. The Clemency Program was a failure in its execution, inasmuch as five sixths of those thought eligible did not even apply for clemency, and the few who applied received arbitrary and inequitable treatment.

The one valid point that USMC Gen. Lewis Walt's "Minority Report" makes is the inefficiency of the Presidential Clemency Board. In a full year of operation, a staff of up to 600 persons processed about 20,000 applications for clemency, most of them in a crash panic within the last month or two of operations. Only about 2,500 have in fact so far been offered clemency by the President. The attempt to examine thousands upon thousands of cases on their individual merits is inherently inefficient, not least because it is inherently unjustifiable when the "crimes" in question consist of conflict with the draft and the military in the context of a war whose lawfulness and morality have been rejected by the American people and by most of its political and moral leadership. General Walt, in this matter, merely helps make our point against

any case-by-case amnesty adjudication. Only a universal and unconditional amnesty will meet the tests of efficiency, humanity and justice.

General Walt's "Minority Report" has one other major quarrel with the Clemency Board's proceedings. It concerns the recommendation of clemency for men who have been convicted of serious crimes other than the draft or military absence offense for which clemency was available. The General and his three colleagues claim that this puts the President in the position of pardoning rapists and murderers. That is a serious and knowing distortion. The clemency is offered for the draft and military absence offense only, not for murder or rape or armed robbery. The Board quite properly recommended clemency without considering irrelevant circumstances in the few cases where this problem arose. The President will not be pardoning murder or rape; he will give his limited clemency for the war-related offense for which the applicant has already been punished. One has to remember that some 27% or more of the military absence cases that the Clemency Board considered involved men who had served in Vietnam. Some of these men got involved with drugs, as did innumerable GI's in Vietnam. The bad military discharge which made these men eligible for clemency in the first place, and which is a massive handicap in the job market, together with drug abuse, is without any doubt the source of a high proportion of the other criminal offenses that some few have on their records. It would be compounding the wounds, rather than healing them, to deny them clemency for the military absence offense and the bad discharge because of some other crime for which no clemency or pardon is contemplated or recommended.

For the rest of Gen. Walt's diatribe, one can only mention the angry resentment of any sort of clemency that pervades the so-called "Minority Report" and the grossness of its submission to the White House via the Veterans of Foreign Wars before the Clemency Board as such has made any formal report on its administration of the Clemency Program. With the smiling Mr. Goodell and the scowling General Walt

superintending clemency, like foxes in charge of the chicken coop,
one wonders where President Ford will obtain clemency for his sully-
of the concept of a post-war amnesty.

We call upon the Presidential Clemency Board, now defunct, and
upon the White House promptly to issue a full report on the results
of the Clemency Program. The country is entitled to know what was
and what was not achieved. The President now has on his desk some
12,000 clemency recommendations from his own Board. We call for
the prompt issuance of the clemency warrants, for whatever they are
worth, so that the men concerned will know what their status is. We
call upon the Attorney General and the U.S. Pardon Attorney, now
charged with the cleaning up of the Board's remaining workload, to
apply standards of judgment with respect to clemency at least no
more stringent than those of the Clemency Board. The notion of equal
protection demands nothing less.

Finally, we call upon the President, and upon the Congress to
share the amnesty that they have extended to themselves for the
governmental lawlessness called the War in Southeast Asia, to share
their amnesty with those of our citizens, most of them of the young
generation, who continue to bear the wounds of participation in and
the wounds of resistance to the war. No problem will be solved, no
one's life even slightly improved, by making the idealistic and the
ill-equipped continue to suffer for Vietnam. The Ford Clemency
Program failed. Honesty must compel the Clemency Board and the
President to acknowledge the failure. Decency and humanity should
compel the President and the Congress to enact a universal and
unconditional amnesty for all those who have already undergone or
still face criminal or administrative penalties for their conflict
with the draft, the military and the war during the Vietnam era.
It is time.

Also - called upon the -30- Media to do what it
could in seeing that that current recommendations
before the Pardoning Attorney and the President would
not be re-examined but allowed to go
through as recommended by the Board

ACLU NEWS

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Telephone day: (212) 725-1222 night: 725-1473 home: 799-9258

PR 28-75

For release: Friday, October 3, 1975, 11 a.m.

ACLU DENOUNCES PRESIDENT'S CLEMENCY PROGRAM AS "FAILURE"
Calls for General Amnesty "To End the War Against Americans"

Washington, D.C., Oct. 3:

The Presidential Clemency Program for Vietnam War-resisters, which closed its doors on September 15, was described as "a failure on conception, design, and execution" by the amnesty director of the American Civil Liberties Union at a press conference here today. Henry Schwarzschild, the ACLU official, said that the program's failure underscored the need for a universal and unconditional amnesty that would "end the war against hundreds of thousands of young Americans who would not submit quietly to an unconstitutional and immoral war."

The civil liberties union representative charged that the Clemency Program, announced with much fanfare by President Ford one year ago, had excluded most of those who needed a post-war amnesty and had attracted fewer than 15% of those who were actually eligible for clemency. President Ford, who had described his program as an effort at national reconciliation, has signed only about 2,500 clemency warrants to date. About 21,000 men applied for clemency out of the estimated 135,000 who were eligible. The ACLU claims over three quarters of a million men and women require a general

amnesty to overcome the disabilities created by war resistance and conflict with the military services in the Vietnam era.

The ACLU also denounced retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Lewis Walt, a former member of the Presidential Clemency Board, who issued a "minority report," signed also by three other Board members, which was sharply critical of the "amnesty orientation" of the Board's majority. Mr. Schwarzschild said that "neither attacks on the late Clemency Program from professional warriors nor self-serving praise for it from its administrators can transform that failure of a clemency into a decent or successful amnesty." He continued: "The Presidential Clemency Board minority of four has little to worry about; the majority of fourteen are entitled to no pride of achievement. In the Ford Clemency Board, 4 plus 14 equals 0."

In his statement, Mr. Schwarzschild called upon the President and the Congress to "share the amnesty that they have extended to themselves for the governmental lawlessness called the War in Southeast Asia" with the war resisters.

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
PROJECT ON AMNESTY

October 3, 1975

Fact Sheet:

THE PRESIDENTIAL CLEMENCY PROGRAM and AMNESTY

(For the purposes of this memorandum, the Vietnam Era is reckoned to be the span from August 1964 (Gulf of Tonkin Resolution) to January 1973 (Cease Fire Agreements).)

1. Number of people in need of post-Vietnam War amnesty.

- | | | |
|----|---|----------------|
| A. | Selective Service System delinquents | 209,000 |
| | Department of Justice draft indictments | 23,400 |
| | -- draft convictions | 8,700 |
| | DoJ draft prosecutions pending | |
| | Oct. 1974 | 6,700 |
| | Feb. 1975 | 4,400 |
| B. | Non-registrants and late registrants for the draft: | |
| | Number unknown | |
| | (The Selective Service System's estimates of non-registration range from 4% to 10% per year. About 2,000,000 males turn 18 each year in the U.S.; multiply this by the 10 year-plus of the war. The number of persons technically in jeopardy of draft prosecution for non-registration may be in the million-or-more range.) | |
| C. | Military deserters at large | |
| | 1974 DoD estimate | 12,500 |
| | 1975 DoD estimate | 10,500 |
| D. | Other military offenses | |
| | No. of courts-martial | 550,000 |
| E. | Less-than-honorable military discharges | 660,000 |
| F. | Civilian protest and resistance offenses | Number unknown |
| G. | Exclusion of "aliens" from the country | |
| | Ca. 7,500 U.S. war resisters so far naturalized in Canada. Thousands more qualifying for naturalization in Canada in 1975 to 1980. | |

Total number of people affected by a general amnesty:
ca. 750,000-plus

2. Number of people eligible for the Presidential Clemency Program and number of applications received.

	Eligible	Applied	%
DoD (unconvicted deserters)	10,500	5,500	53%
DoJ (unconvicted draft violators)	4,400	770	18%
Presidential Clemency Board:			
draft convictions	8,700	2,000	23%
court-martial and pun. disch.	20,000	5,000	25%
admin. discharges	91,000	8,500	8%
PCB total	120,000	15,500	13%
Grand total	ca. 135,000	21,170	15%

3. Dispositions of clemency applications.

A. Department of Justice

Clemency agreements signed 711

Alternate service sentences imposed:

maximum (24 mos.)	51%)	
18-23 mos.	25%)	18-24 mos.: 76%
1-17 mos.	23%	
None	0%	

Notes:

- entrapment of persons into clemency agreements who were not under active prosecution and others who had been omitted from "final" indictment list.
- waiver of constitutional rights required.
- "reaffirmation of allegiance" required.
- admission of guilt required.
- sentence imposed by prosecutor.
- sentence unreviewable and unappealable.

B. Department of Defense

Military absentees processed 5,500

Alternate service sentences imposed

<u>maximum (19-24 mos.)</u>	Army: 79%
	Navy: 79%
	AF : 67%
	MC : 83%
	<u>Total:</u> 79.6%

Notes:

- The "Undesirable Discharge" given is a life-long stigma and handicap, and effectively disqualifies for veterans' benefits.
- "reaffirmation of allegiance" required.
- acknowledgment required that person did not do his duty to his country.
- alternate service terms imposed by senior career military officers, without hearing or possibility of appeal.
- processing ignored possible entitlement to Honorable Discharges for illegal induction, in-service conscientious objection, hardship, medical and other reasons.

C. Presidential Clemency Board

See "Table 1" attached

Notes:

- PCB denied clemency to about 6% of applicants
- PCB recommended unconditional clemency to about 44% of applicants (83% of the draft resister cases, 38% of the military desertion and discharge cases).
- PCB recommended clemency contingent upon alternate service in about 50% of its cases (16% of the draft resister cases, 56% of the military desertion and discharge cases).
- PCB made some clemency recommendation in about 14,500 cases. The DoJ has an additional 1,000 cases to dispose of. The President has signed only about 2,500 clemency warrants so far.
- IMPORTANT: All applicants to the PCB have already served their punishment for whatever draft or military offense they were convicted of. Any

TABLE 1: Presidential Clemency Board dispositions (i.e. recommendations for Presidential action) (1)(2)



PRESIDENTIAL CLEMENCY BOARD DISPOSITIONS

	<u>Total no. of cases</u>	<u>Uncond. pardon</u>	<u>Alternate 3 mos.</u>	<u>4-6 mos.</u>	<u>Service 7-9 mos.</u>	<u>Obligation 10-12 mos.</u>	<u>13-24 mos.</u>	<u>No Clemency</u>
<u>Former military personnel</u>	14,000 (3)(4)(5)	38%	20%	23%	10%	3%	0.2%	6%
<u>Draft violators</u>	2,000 (6)(7)	83%	8%	5%	1%	2%	0.4%	1%

Notes: General - (1) The report is as of approximately September 1, 1975.
 (2) All figures are approximate and rounded.

Former military personnel -

- (3) 8,400 (60%) with administrative (Undesirable) discharges.
 5,600 (40%) with court-martial convictions and punitive (Bad Conduct or Dishonorable) discharges.
- (4) 7,140 (51%) served no time in confinement in military service.
- (5) Average time spent in confinement pursuant to court-martial sentence and/or pre-trial: 2 1/3 months.

Draft violators -

- (6) 1,335 (66%) served no time in confinement pursuant to sentence of court.
- (7) Average time spent in confinement pursuant to sentence of court and/or pre-trial: 4 1/3 months.

PCB-imposed alternate service sentence is additional punishment.

- Over one half of those receiving clemency recommendations from the PCB do not need a pardon because they were never convicted of a crime (they were "administratively" discharged from the military).

- The "Clemency Discharge" offered by the program does not entitle to veterans' benefits and stigmatizes the holder as a deserter or even traitor.

- The PCB did not grant the applicants the right to a hearing before the Board, nor was there any appeal from its findings or recommendations.

D. Selective Service System ("Reconciliation Service").

See "Table 2" attached

Notes: -Short-term jobs, not in competition with the labor market, are simply not available.

-Great diversity in judgment of State Selective Service directors and draft boards in qualifying jobs for "Reconciliation Service"

-Out of 20,000 persons processed by the whole Clemency Program, fewer than 2,000 are doing alternate service. Over 2,000 have already refused to do the alternate service or have dropped out. More are sure to follow, especially as they realize the uselessness of the remedies accruing at the completion and as they cannot find jobs that qualify and earn them a living. Yet the Selective Service System used the Clemency Program to inflate its budget request this FY by \$6,000,000.

TABLE 2: "Reconciliation Service" referrals and dispositions (as of 8/26/75)

	<u>Clemencies processed</u>	<u>Referrals rec'd at 8/26</u>	<u>Recon. Serv. completed</u>	<u>Doing Recon. Serv.</u>	<u>Refused or terminated</u>
DoD	5,500	4,503	73	1,359	2,126
DoJ	711	721 (!)	13	469	36
PCB	<u>14,500</u>	<u>164</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	20,711	5,388	93	1,863	2,166

Oct. 3, 1975

National Council For Universal Unconditional Amnesty

COMPARISON:

HR 9596 (limited "relief")

NCUUA Bill (Total Amnesty)

TIME PERIOD COVERS - August 4, 1964 - March 28, 1973

TIME PERIOD COVERS - January 1, 1961 - April 30, 1975

MILITARY SELECTIVE SERVICE VIOLATORS

MILITARY SELECTIVE SERVICE VIOLATORS

All those who failed or refused to register for the draft, who failed to accept or refused induction into the Armed Forces, or who otherwise violated the Selective Service Act or regulations during the time period covered by this bill must file a certificate stating that their act was because of DISAPPROVAL OF THE MILITARY INVOLVEMENT OF THE U.S. IN INDOCHINA. This certificate is filed with the Attorney General. All prior convictions are then vacated, pending charges dismissed, records expunged, and immunity from prosecution given.

All those who failed or refused to register for the draft, who failed to accept or refused induction into the Armed Forces, or who otherwise violated the Selective Service Act or regulations during the time period covered by this bill are automatically granted amnesty. The Government has the responsibility for effecting this amnesty and informing all those involved. The individual is not required to petition the government, or to sign any document, or to take any other action.

(Note: under this bill, the Department of Justice may prosecute an individual for perjury or making a false statement in the certificate of disapproval, in which case the relief granted may be rescinded.)

All rights are restored, records expunged, convictions vacated, and immunity from prosecution given. (Note: no perjury or false statement charge can be made since the individual signs no statement.)

VIOLATORS OF THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE

VIOLATORS OF THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE

All those who are charged with violating 2 specific articles of UCMJ (85 - AWOL, 86 - desertion), or who are "alleged to have disobeyed an order which ... if obeyed, the member or former member could reasonably have foreseen, under ordinary circumstances, to have as its possible consequence the death of another human being" during the time period covered by this bill are eligible for relief if they file a certificate stating that the act was a result of DISAPPROVAL OF THE MILITARY INVOLVEMENT OF THE U.S. IN INDOCHINA.

All deserters and AWOLs and violators of 31 other specified articles of UCMJ which could be anti-war related (such as making "disloyal statements", distributing GI newspapers, or using "contemptuous language") and do not involve civilian crimes are automatically amnestied. The Government is responsible for informing all individuals concerned.

The individual is then granted a Certificate of Resignation which does not entitle him to any VA benefits. While this certificate can go through the discharge review proceedings, it is just as stigmatizing and discriminatory as a less than honorable discharge. All records are expunged.

All rights are to be restored, the person is granted immunity from prosecution, and is given an Honorable discharge, including full benefits and no stigmatizing code number.

(Note: other UCMJ violations are not covered in this bill.)

+ V.A. benefits if served required 180 days in military

CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP

Those who would like to regain U.S. citizenship must take an oath renouncing foreign citizenship, sign the certificate stating their act was a result of disapproval of U.S. military involvement in Indochina, and U.S. citizenship will be restored.

Persons who have lost or renounced U.S. citizenship shall have it unconditionally restored by stating to the Commission (see that section) that they lost citizenship because of resistance or opposition to the draft, the military, or the involvement of the U.S. in Indochina.

Others who want only to visit the U.S. must state to the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the DOJ that renouncing U.S. citizenship was due to disapproval of U.S. military involvement in Indochina. The individual is then to be exempted from the exclusionary parts of

By a similar statement, persons who wish to retain foreign citizenship, but wish to visit the U.S. shall be exempted from the exclusion provisions of the Immigration laws.



Immigration and Naturalization Act.

OTHER THAN HONORABLE DISCHARGES

Any such person who has been administratively discharged or court martialled from the Armed Forces, for AWOL, desertion, or who disobeyed an order which, if obeyed, could have led to the death of another human being, with an other than honorable discharge, can be granted a certificate of resignation if he signs a statement saying he disapproved of US military involvement in Indochina. This certificate carries no VA benefits, but is eligible for discharge review procedures. It is just as stigmatizing and discriminatory as a less than honorable discharge.

CIVILIAN RESISTERS

HR 9596 does not provide for civilian resisters.

CLEMENCY PROGRAM

Those serving reconciliation service, planning to, etc., are treated like all other applicants. They must fill out a certificate stating the action or alleged violation was due to DISAPPROVAL OF THE U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN INDOCHINA. The Clemency Program's alternate service can be terminated if so desired.

APPEAL

Under HR 9596, an individual who is eligible under the program, but has other charges not covered by the bill must petition to receive dismissal for those alleged violations, provided the act in question resulted because of disapproval of U.S. military involvement in Indochina and was not a crime of violence against person or property.

The burden of proof is on the individual and not on the government. No time limit is placed on U.S. district court's response or action. A three year time limit is set for individuals if any judicial remedy is sought.

no oaths of allegiance

OTHER THAN HONORABLE DISCHARGES

All persons given an other than honorable discharge in the period covered by this bill are automatically granted an uncoded Honorable discharge. Responsibility is with the Department of Defense to send Honorable discharges to all concerned individuals (no individual is required to file a petition). All are entitled to full VA benefits.

After April 30, 1975 all persons discharged from the Armed Forces are to receive an uncoded single-type discharge.

CIVILIAN RESISTERS

All those who are alleged to have violated 8 specified articles of title 18, U.S. Code involving violations affecting the national defense (such as harboring deserters, destruction of war material, corresponding with a foreign government, etc.) during the time period covered by the bill are automatically amnestied, records are expunged, rights are restored, and immunity from prosecution is granted. It is the responsibility of the Government to notify each individual.

CLEMENCY PROGRAM

All those agreements with the Clemency Board are null and void and all are eligible for total amnesty as are others who did not accept the Clemency Program or were not eligible. Honorable discharges would replace "Clemency discharges" with full benefits.

APPEAL

The NCUUA bill provides for a process of claim filing. The individual who believes an alleged violation should be amnestied files a claim to the Commission stating that the alleged violation was due to OPPOSITION TO THE DRAFT, THE MILITARY, OR TO U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN INDOCHINA. (Immunity from prosecution is provided for personal appearances). The Government has 90 days to show that the act was clearly unrelated to opposition to the draft, the military or to U.S. involvement in Indochina. If the Government cannot or does not do so, the individual receives unconditional amnesty and full rights as in the case of automatic amnesty.

THE COMMISSION

The NCUUA bill provides for a Commission of 7 members to hear all claims not automatically amnestied. The composition is as follows: at least 2 shall be women, at least 2 shall be from minority groups, at least 2 shall not have served in the Armed Forces, at least 2 shall have been born since January, 1, 1943.

*Mrs. Ransom read this
statement*

NCUUA

National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty

For immediate release:

Statement by Pat Simon, Gold Star Parents for Amnesty

The recent revelations by a former CIA official --- that American officials deliberately mis-represented the strength of the Viet Cong prior to the Tet offensive of 1968 --- compounds the anguish of families of boys who lost their lives in Vietnam. As if it were not enough to lose a son in war, we must now contend with the knowledge that American GIs were literally led into ambush by American generals who portrayed various areas as militarily secure, when they knew that the strength of opposition forces was in fact overwhelming. Now we must live with the knowledge that deceiving the American public about the progress of the war was more important to our leaders than the lives of our sons. Now we must live with the knowledge that while our nation's leaders were speaking of protecting the rights of the South Vietnamese people, the United States Ambassador to South Vietnam was engaged in the treason of concealing the strength of opposition troops.

These most recent revelations of our government's criminality are bearing out some of the most extreme statements made during the war by war resisters; it should now be apparent that many of the boys who deserted from the battle fields understood all too well the treachery which was rampant among their superiors. These sinister developments make the government's policy of refusing amnesty to war resisters seem especially perverse. For this reason, we join with NCUUA in calling for universal unconditional amnesty for all such resisters.

We believe that some sort of legal action should be brought against those officials who participated in this outrageous conduct. The steering committee of Gold Star Parents for Amnesty is presently investigating the possibility of bringing a class action suit against officials concerned, on behalf of the families of some ten thousand men who lost their lives because of this criminal deceit.

Only in talking stage by Mrs. Simon in Boston - ACLU favor

has not been asked - as yet -
to represent them. If asked -
they may consider it -

NCUUA

National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty

235 East 49th Street
New York City 10017
(212) 688-8097

For immediate release, Washington, D.C., Oct. 3, 1975

Statement by coordinator of NCUUA

Louise Ransom

The National Council For Universal Unconditional Amnesty salutes the ending of the President's Clemency Program with relief and hope. It was no accident that a large percentage of the men and women it purported to help boycotted, with remarkable unity, what they conceived to be "shamnesty".

It had been stated frequently by members of the Clemency Board that the reasons for the small number of applicants was lack of information on the provisions of the program. On the contrary, the resisters knew all too well that it was highly punitive, excluded most who needed amnesty, and in fact extended the gross inequities of the Selective Service system which managed to induct only about 10% of the eligible draft-age manpower primarily from the poor and racial minorities of our country. Furthermore, it attempted to obscure the fact that opposition to the U.S. military involvement in Indochina was a prime motivation of resisters.

Our relief is due to the fact that the American people are no longer being deluded into thinking that some kind of justice was taking place, and the hope is that the way may now be cleared for Congress to enact the kind of universal, unconditional amnesty which is the only just and practical way of resolving one of the most significant legacies of the Vietnam generation, one which directly affects the lives of over a million of our young people and their families.

A step has been taken by the Subcommittee on the Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice, chaired by Rep. Robert Kastenmeier, with HR 9596, the "Vietnam Era Reconciliation Act, 1975," which will be debated by the entire Judiciary Committee some time this month. This bill has gone significantly beyond the Clemency Program to bring relief from legal jeopardy for some categories of war resisters. Unfortunately, a majority of military and civilian offenses are still not covered under this bill, and those cases which are covered will still suffer the stigma in seeking employment which results from any discharge which is less than honorable. Since, as mentioned previously, the burdens of the military effort fell primarily on the poverty sector, this places a disproportionate hardship on minority veterans.

The Amnesty Council, through its 100 affiliates, will be seeking to broaden the coverage of the Kastenmeier Bill through meetings with legislators, regional conferences throughout the nation, and a presence in Washington at the time of the debate.

(more)

NCUUA has written its own bill as a model toward which to work and is presented in summary here.

With military hostilities finally at an end, it is essential that we do not allow there to be a cover-up of the abuses of government power which led to and continued U.S. intervention in Indochina. In this connection the following statement is presented by our affiliate, Gold Star Parents For Amnesty, in response to Samuel Adams' revelations concerning the CIA and the Tet offensive:

NCUUA press contact: Irma Zigas, (212) 688-8097

