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A statement on AMNESTY by Robert F. Froehlke, President - The Sentry Corporation and former Secretary of the Army (1971-1973), given at 10 AM on March 11, 1974 to the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and the Administration of Justice: House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.



Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I appreciate your invitation to appear today and give my opinion on amnesty. At the outset I should state that the subject of amnesty like so many other issues I have faced in both government and business defies a categorical rightness or wrongness. Amnesty is much like the issue of United States involvement in and departure from Southeast Asia. Only those who are absolutely positive of the rightness of their position are wrong.

The fact that he is not sure of his position will not, and I believe should not, deter anyone from testifying before your committee. It has not deterred me. We must rely on our personal values, experience and just plain instinct. Obviously, to refuse to take any position until one is absolutely sure he is right is at best naive and at worst cowardly.

My own values and experience - but mostly my instinct - tell me now is the time to begin to discuss and then act on amnesty. At the same time - and in an unconfident way - I hastily add that my position could be dead wrong.

But, then, it is not for me but for you Congressmen to decide who is right or wrong.

And, that is why, I presume, Congressmen hold hearings.

Permit me to begin by giving my views as to what amnesty is not.

Amnesty is not a liberal rallying point. I am a moderate, as are most Americans who must ask for amnesty before it becomes reality. Putting a liberal tag on amnesty might glamorize the issue but it will most certainly dim its political future.

Amnesty is not an "anti-military" issue. I was, am and will continue to be pro-military, as are most Americans. Most Americans respect the military and desire that their country remain militarily strong. To categorize amnesty as anti-military does the military a disservice and again hurts the cause of amnesty in the political arena.

Amnesty is not "anti-administration." Admittedly, many thoughtful and well-meaning individuals in this administration oppose amnesty. Conversely, others, like myself were members of the administration, are proud of it, and favor amnesty. The same difference of opinion on this issue can be found in previous administrations.

* * *

Amnesty is an act that only a strong, confident and just nation can bestow. You cannot demand amnesty. You cannot threaten amnesty. Amnesty is given.

The insecure, the mean, the confused cannot ever grant amnesty. Therefore, the fact that amnesty is being discussed augers well for America.

The number of people involved with amnesty is subject to wide variance. Some say 5,000; others 30,000 or 100,000. I suggest over 200 million could and should be involved. 200 million Americans doing a

proud, generous and kindly act of bestowing amnesty.

* * *

Why amnesty and why now?

When serving as Secretary of the Army I opposed amnesty. Then most of our young men were obeying the law and reporting for the draft. Some were being drafted and were fighting and dying in Vietnam.

At that time we could not say to those disobeying that draft law and fleeing from America, "Come home, all is forgiven".

But, why now amnesty for them? Amnesty now because the draft and the killing is over.

Amnesty now because we need to begin mending in every way possible the heartbreak and wounds left by that war. I am not prepared to say Vietnam was right or wrong. I will let the historians do that. However, it is clear that right or wrong, Vietnam deeply hurt America.

Amnesty now because it is America's youth who are involved and America has always shown mercy and restraint with its young people.

* * *

There are two primary considerations which will dictate the parameters of any workable amnesty. On the one hand this country will someday again be facing a draft. In developing an amnesty program nothing should be done which would make a future draft unworkable. I suppose it could be argued that even talking about any amnesty imposes some burden on a future draft. I think not but if the burden is slight I would still accept because the higher priority is the opportunity to heal the hurt.

On the other hand we must constantly bear in mind that all those potentially involved in amnesty have one thing in common - they were young. They have made a mistake, a serious mistake, but they are young. Therefore any amnesty program must not be approached from vindictiveness. But rather from the standpoint of a just and generous nation dealing mercifully with a relatively small number of young people who made a serious error.

* * *

Those potentially eligible for amnesty can be divided into two distinct groups - those who did not enter military service and evaded the draft and those who entered military service and deserted. The two groups must be treated separately.

I have concluded that all draft evaders should be given blanket conditional amnesty. I readily concede that it would be "nice" if we would only grant amnesty to those who fled for moral reasons and not to those who fled for selfish reasons. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine intent. Therefore the amnesty for draft evaders must be blanket.

The amnesty must be conditional. Not necessarily because we want to punish those who ran. Rather because those who ran have not as yet had an opportunity to serve their country like those who stayed and served. Therefore it is only just and reasonable that the first act upon returning to their country should be service to that country - as an obligation and privilege not punishment. (I really see very little reason to argue about the merits of a conditional vs. an unconditional amnesty. Pragmatically it

is my opinion that the American people would under no circumstance allow amnesty of an unconditional variety to ever be enacted by Congress.)

Service to the country should not be limited to the military. It should certainly include the military but should be as broad as service to fellow man can possibly allow. It certainly would include projects like VISTA, Peace Corps, hospitals and churches.

The length of term to be served would have to be determined by Congress. I think the key consideration should be how long is it necessary to serve in order to perform a useful service. Vindictiveness should not enter into the consideration. (In the past I have indicated that I would be satisfied with three months service if some duties could be found where useful service could be performed in that length of time. I chose this relatively short period of time in an attempt to indicate that vindictiveness should not be influencing. I confess that the only possible area where I can come up with useful service in that short a period of time would be in volunteering for medical experiments at great personal risk.)

Perhaps the least controversial group eligible for amnesty is the draft evader who was sentenced and is serving in prison. Clearly these should be granted a full pardon and their service in prison should be considered service to country.

* * *

The deserter is a far more complicated problem and I have not been able to come up with a solution that completely satisfies me. These facts

dictate that it is a different situation than the civilian who evaded the draft:

1. The deserter is subject to the uniform code of military justice.
2. It was not uncommon for the desertion to occur after committing a criminal act.

For the time being I have concluded that the deserter must be treated on a case by case basis. A board must be created that would look at the deserter's total record in a non-vindictive, generous manner. However amnesty should be applied only to an act of desertion and no prior or subsequent criminal acts.

* * *

Is amnesty really possible?

It is, and there are several encouraging signs pointing the way.

The first sign, of course, is that the dialogue has begun. Amnesty is being considered here in the Congress and at various other forums across the land. This must continue.

Another sign is America's history of forgiveness. In less than 30 years we have forgiven our former enemies - Germany and Japan. We are now expending untold political energy and material resources striving to maintain a semblance of detente with China and Russia. If we will forgive entire nations and hundreds of millions of "enemies", then can't we consider forgiveness, rehabilitation and reinstatement of only a few thousand of our brothers?

But, of the greatest encouragement is that America is a strong nation of strong, confident and just people who have long demonstrated a capacity to forgive and forget. These people would consider amnesty.

The meek, the mean, the insecure cannot forgive and forget. Instead, they would demand recrimination, indulge in deviousness, wallow in self-flagellation. Theirs is to counterattack against those who turned and ran when the nation needed them. Theirs is to punish, and punish again, the men who wronged them. These people would not consider amnesty, but they are not America's people. So, I am encouraged.

* * *

Yes, America can grant amnesty. But should America forgive and forget?

We should not forgive and forget if our reason for doing so is to cleanse our soul from immoral acts.

We should not forgive and forget if our reason for doing so is an attempt to return to this country "the best who left".

But, we should forgive and forget if amnesty will help heal the hurt this nation has suffered. America has been badly hurt this last decade. That is fact and no amount of blame-placing on individuals or groups will help heal that hurt.

(As a matter of fact, any attempt to combine determination of guilt for the hurt with the cause of amnesty can only doom amnesty. There are just too many candidates responsible for the damage who would feel an obligation to oppose the guilt-placing.)

Unquestionably Vietnam has compounded this nation's sorrows over the last decade. Thus, isn't it a unique opportunity before us today that we may use amnesty as an agent to heal the hurt?

An unwelcome alternative would be for America instead to indulge in vindictiveness. But, that could only punish America more than America has already been punished. Already I see a direct correlation between the continuing turmoil within the nation and our present hardline stand on amnesty. The president said long ago "We need a renewal of the spirit to meet the crisis of the spirit in our country". Is not forgiveness a vital function of the spirit?

Is there a more noble deed than for a strong, forgiving America to say to those who left, come home now? I think not.

Has there been a time when America needed more a profusion of noble deeds? I think not.

In conclusion, gentlemen, let me share with you an observation from my scores of conversations and debates on the issue. It is that it might well be impossible for those most directly involved in Vietnam to approach amnesty with objectivity and without allowing emotion to influence their position. The draft avoiders and deserters on one hand and the bereaved mothers and widows, veterans or professional soldiers on the other hand might well, and very understandably, look at amnesty from a very personal perspective.

I understand and respect this fact. From their personal perspective, as each views the issue, their individual conclusions are right and just.

I suggest, however, that most Americans can and should look at amnesty from a much broader perspective. Those who have been less affected by Vietnam can and should approach amnesty from the broader perspective of what long lasting effect could it have on America; what long lasting effect will it have on America.

I compliment you for holding these hearings now. Thank you for the privilege of appearing before you. Hopefully what has transpired will inspire some of the dispassionate and the disinterested among us to judge amnesty. But, not because there is a wrong to be righted. But because amnesty is the opportunity to begin healing the hurt that goes far beyond Vietnam itself.

America today needs its unifying and healing cause.

Perhaps it may be found in the prophet Micah's admonition to his people, Chapter 6, Verse 8 of the Phillips Translation:

You know well enough, O People, what is good!

For what does the Lord require from you,

But to be just, to love mercy,

And to walk humbly with your God?

Thank you.

American Civil Liberties Union Foundation

22 East 40th Street • New York, New York 10016 • (212) 725-1222

Project on Amnesty

Henry Schwarzschild, Director

March 14, 1974

Charles Goodell, Esq.
Heideman, Mason & Goodell
1225 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

914-248-4787

Re: Amnesty

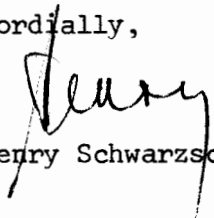
Dear Charles:

Thank you again for meeting with Dr. Sterling Cary, the President of the National Council of Churches, and with Carl Rogers and me to chat about the possible usefulness of laying our concerns before Vice President Ford. At the very least, it would be very important for him to not lock himself into the present Administration position on this issue.

I enclose statements by Melvin Laird ^{and} ~~the~~ former Army Secretary Froehlke on amnesty. Mr. Froehlke testified at the House Judiciary Committee amnesty hearings, and quite helpfully, I thought. That Mr. Laird goes even as far as he does may give the Vice President some confidence that he will not be seen as allying himself with the likes of us...

Please let me know whether there is anything I can do to help. We shall all be grateful for your efforts.

Cordially,


Henry Schwarzschild



HS:c
Encs.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 29, 1974

P10-12
23/4

PRESS CONFERENCE

MELVIN LAIRD

COUNSELLOR TO THE PRESIDENT

10:30 A.M. EST

ROOSEVELT ROOM

Q Mr. Laird, do you want to make any opening statement since this is your, shall we say, farewell press conference at the White House, or are there to be future press conferences with you at the White House?

MR. LAIRD: Well, I hope that I can attend some press conferences at the White House in my new role with the Reader's Digest Association, but I think I will be in a little different position. I will be back to the position of asking questions. I had that very pleasant responsibility of being a question-asker in the State Senate in Wisconsin, and then for a good many years in the Congress. So perhaps I will be attending some White House press conferences in a different role.

Q You are going to get a White House press pass?

MR. LAIRD: Gee, you know, I haven't really made that hurdle yet.

Q How would you get in otherwise?

MR. LAIRD: Well, it might be difficult, but I think they would let me in.



Q Was that expected, that kind of a ratio?

MR. LAIRD: Well, the Vietnamization program was based upon the possibility of fighting continuing, and giving to the South Vietnamese the capability to withstand that kind of fighting. They have that capability.

Now, Helen, by telling you that, I am not putting my approval on the killing that is going on in South Vietnam, or in North Vietnam, or in Cambodia, or in Thailand, or any other place in the world. I think it is disastrous, and I would like it stopped, but the problem I think when people get to the Vietnamization program, the Vietnamization program was set up so that these people could handle that and not have to rely upon United States Air Force, Navy, and ground forces as they did during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. We tried to change that movement, and I think we did.

Q Along that line, I think that the United States of America has another great problem out of the Vietnam War. I would like to know the position of the Administration on amnesty, and has it changed since the President said he would never grant amnesty, and he didn't consider a sojourn in the Peace Corps as adequate penalty? What is the position on that?

MR. LAIRD: Well, I have written a letter to the Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. As a matter of fact, I talked to him yesterday. He was down in Atlanta and he wrote a letter to the President condemning my position on this question of amnesty. When I was Secretary of Defense I felt we should not be considering the question of amnesty either blanket, general, or conditional. I think that the situation now that there are no Americans being shot at and killed anyplace in the world, that this is a matter that should be considered by our country.

My position is still against blanket or general amnesty for violators of the Selective Service Act. We have always, in this country, however, tempered our justice with mercy and with understanding. We have always felt that there were conditions under which justice was handed out in an equal fashion, and that those conditions and motivations of the time should be given some consideration in the Administration of justice.

At the present time very few, a very, very small percentage of our violators of the Selective Service Act are actually being prosecuted. The penalties which are being handed out to these young men are different by jurisdiction. Some are very, very tough, some are very, very meager in the terms of the relationship of the penalties, all the way from mowing the lawn on Saturdays for a year at the Courthouse to some people getting very strong prison sentences.

I have written a letter to the Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I would be glad to make that letter available to you. I delivered it to him yesterday, and after this meeting, I will see that that letter is made available.

Now, my position may be a little different than the President's, but I would like to think that there would be some movement here. I am against a general or blanket, but I think some sort of conditional approach towards equity in this area needs to be considered and this letter to the Commander of the VFW -- and I visited with him yesterday on it, the letter was delivered to him yesterday -- I see no reason you should not have a copy of it, and we will make it available to you after this meeting.

Q Have you talked to the President about this, Mr. Laird?

MR. LAIRD: About this question?

Q Yes, recently?

MR. LAIRD: No, I have not. I have not talked to the President about it recently. I talked to the President about the question back when I was over in the Defense Department, but I have not had a visit with the President about this particular question, and I think that my views are put forth fairly well in this letter.

Q Were they solicited on the basis of your personal feelings, or the White House?

MR. LAIRD: Well, they were solicited by a very tough attack that the Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars -- and I am a member of that organization -- made upon me for suggesting that we had to consider the question of equity at this particular time, and he interpreted my remarks I thought, a little unfairly, and so I wrote him a letter. He did not write to me, he wrote to the President condemning my position.

Q Mr. Laird, going back to the continued fighting in Vietnam, because of all the killing that has gone on for years, do you think it was perhaps premature to have proclaimed a year ago that we now have a generation of peace there?

MR. LAIRD: I think you have to interpret the statement, I think, that most of the people who were talking about that were talking about the United States involvement. I have always talked about the United States involvement. I don't know whether you were present at my press conference as I left the Pentagon, but anyone that was, I don't think they could misinterpret what I was talking about.

Q Mr. Laird, on the basis of an article that you wrote for Readers' Digest, I believe, in which you said that the Russians ---

MR. LAIRD: Have you bought that edition?

(Laughter)

(Laughter)

Q I have got to buy it since you are writing it.

Q Mr. Laird, do you think it would be possible for the President to attract new staff members with you leaving and Bryce Harlow leaving? You were brought in as a bright hope to save the Administration and now even though you have reasons for it, the two of you and others are leaving. Can he actually attract people for the next three years?

MR. LAIRD: Yes, I think he can. I think it should be understood that Bryce Harlow -- and I am not sure just when Bryce Harlow is leaving. You will have to talk to Bryce about that. But Bryce Harlow and I came here to the White House not as a permanent sort of an arrangement. We came here on a more or less temporary basis.

I explained at a meeting down in the press room the other day that ever since I had known Bryce Harlow and each time he came to the White House, the next day he was talking about when he was going to leave. That wasn't meant as a mean crack about Bryce Harlow. As a matter of fact, I had met with Bryce before I went down to the press room that day and Bryce said that is the way I should answer that question.

So I noticed that John Osborne took me on that I was sort of knifing my friend, Bryce Harlow, in the back, by answering it that way, but I hope John reads this transcript because I answered it in the manner in which Bryce wanted me to answer it, and if that is knifing anybody in the back, I don't understand what that is all about.

So we did come here temporarily. I think there has been a great addition in Vice President Ford coming here to the White House and being a member of this team, and I think he can do a better job in the areas that I had responsibility then I can. And I think he will do a better job.

Q Mr. Laird, I want to ask you something and that is about the large number of men and women, particularly blacks, who went into the service, were drafted, during the

Vietnamese war who had some infraction of the rules or an inability to collaborate and they got dishonorable discharges and now we have those people back in this country look for jobs and they can't get jobs and we have a big problem. There must be thousands of them.

What are you going to do about them? Are you going to give them amnesty?

MR. LAIRD: I have discussed this. I discussed this in the letter which --

Q These are the boys who didn't go to foreign countries.

MR. LAIRD: -- I want you to look at and to consider. The question of justice in this country, I feel, in some cases is not being treated on an equitable basis, and I raised this question in this letter.

I am not for a general statement or a blanket statement in this particular area at all, and I would never be for that, but there are cases that do need to be studied.

~~Q Mr. Laird, do you still believe that the President will not either be impeached or resign? The last time you spoke to this you had been to the Hill and made a head count. How do you feel now?~~

~~MR. LAIRD: Now, this business of head count, I want to be a little careful on that head count business. I do believe that I can count votes fairly well. I used to be able to do that, but in this particular case, on the question of indictment -- and I refer to it as indictment because there are people who think impeachment means that the President is somehow taken out of office, and impeachment does not do that, so I use the term indictment.~~

~~After I returned from Wisconsin last time, talking to people up and down the street, I found that they did not have a clear understanding of the term impeachment. They do understand indictment much better, so I use that term. That is the only reason I use that term. I think it is more understandable.~~

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 28, 1974

Dear Commander:

I received a copy of your letter to the President on amnesty and would like to comment.

As a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I share with you, Commander, a great pride in our nation's strength and freedom. As part of our heritage of freedom, we have always cherished the redemptive quality of our system of justice.

As you know, during my tenure as Secretary of Defense, I felt strongly that it was completely inappropriate, unwise and unjust to consider granting any form of amnesty. I felt that while brave Americans were fighting and dying in battle any consideration of granting amnesty was unwarranted and would have had an adverse effect on the morale of our Armed Forces. My feelings at that time were identical whether the amnesty being discussed by some was "conditional" or "general." I did make known, however, that looking beyond Vietnam we were studying various reports and studies on the complex question of amnesty.

On my departure from the Department of Defense, circumstances had changed markedly. No longer were American troops fighting and dying in combat anywhere in the world. As a result of changed conditions, my views with respect to considering the question of amnesty have also changed.

Throughout my career of public service, I have learned to avoid absolute, dogmatic positions. Neither the political system nor the judicial system of the United States works on "blanket" and arbitrary approaches. Both recognize the vital roles of (1) circumstances and (2) motivation in determining political or judicial solutions to our problems. As I have said, we pride ourselves on administering justice with mercy and understanding.

With respect to the question of a "blanket" or "general" amnesty, let me emphasize that I am now and always have been opposed to a sweeping general grant of amnesty. However, there are individual cases where the circumstances require that justice provide for what some have termed "conditional amnesty." I do not like this term and only use it for lack of a better description of an equitable approach to this difficult problem. It is my view that circumstance and motivation on a case-by-case basis, under our concept of justice, must be taken into account today when dealing with violators of our selective service laws. It is noteworthy that only a small percentage of these men have thus far been prosecuted by the Department of Justice, and in these cases widely differing penalties have been assigned to individuals varying by jurisdiction.

I hope these comments will allay some of your understandable concerns. As you know, I have nothing but a profound sense of respect and gratitude to the men and women who served in Vietnam, 56,244 of whom gave their lives in the service of our country. It is a lasting source of pride to me that I had the opportunity and privilege to associate with such fine Americans and their families. I have never committed any act, nor would I, which would be a "breach of faith" with these men and women.

Finally, I am grateful to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and to the Ladies Auxiliary for their steadfast support of our defense effort, and especially for your steadfast support during my service as Secretary of Defense. I trust, and am sure, that you will continue to extend that support to the President and to his defense policy in the cause of strength and peace.

Sincerely,



Melvin R. Laird
Counsellor to the President
for Domestic Affairs

Commander Ray R. Soden
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Washington Memorial Building
200 Maryland Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C. 20002

A statement on AMNESTY by Robert F. Froehke, President - The Sentry Corporation and former Secretary of the Army (1971-1973), given at 10 AM on March 11, 1974 to the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and the Administration of Justice: House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

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The fact that he is not sure of his position will not, and I believe should not, deter anyone from testifying before your committee. It has not deterred me. We must rely on our personal values, experience and just plain instinct. Obviously, to refuse to take any position until one is absolutely sure he is right is at best naive and at worst cowardly.

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1. The deserter is subject to the uniform code of military justice.
2. It was not uncommon for the desertion to occur after committing a criminal act.

For the time being I have concluded that the deserter must be treated on a case by case basis. A board must be created that would look at the deserter's total record in a non-vindictive, generous manner. However amnesty should be applied only to an act of desertion and no prior or subsequent criminal acts.

* * *

Is amnesty really possible?

It is, and there are several encouraging signs pointing the way.

The first sign, of course, is that the dialogue has begun. Amnesty is being considered here in the Congress and at various other forums across the land. This must continue.

Another sign is America's history of forgiveness. In less than 30 years we have forgiven our former enemies - Germany and Japan. We are now expending untold political energy and material resources striving to maintain a semblance of detente with China and Russia. If we will forgive entire nations and hundreds of millions of "enemies", then can't we consider forgiveness, rehabilitation and reinstatement of only a few thousand of our brothers?

But, of the greatest encouragement is that America is a strong nation of strong, confident and just people who have long demonstrated a capacity to forgive and forget. These people would consider amnesty.

The meek, the mean, the insecure cannot forgive and forget. Instead, they would demand recrimination, indulge in deviousness, wallow in self-flagellation. Theirs is to counterattack against those who turned and ran when the nation needed them. Theirs is to punish, and punish again, the men who wronged them. These people would not consider amnesty, but they are not America's people. So, I am encouraged.

* * *

Yes, America can grant amnesty. But should America forgive and forget?

We should not forgive and forget if our reason for doing so is to cleanse our soul from immoral acts.

We should not forgive and forget if our reason for doing so is an attempt to return to this country "the best who left".

But, we should forgive and forget if amnesty will help heal the hurt this nation has suffered. America has been badly hurt this last decade. That is fact and no amount of blame-placing on individuals or groups will help heal that hurt.

(As a matter of fact, any attempt to combine determination of guilt for the hurt with the cause of amnesty can only doom amnesty. There are just too many candidates responsible for the damage who would feel an obligation to oppose the guilt-placing.)

Unquestionably Vietnam has compounded this nation's sorrows over the last decade. Thus, isn't it a unique opportunity before us today that we may use amnesty as an agent to heal the hurt?

An unwelcome alternative would be for America instead to indulge in vindictiveness. But, that could only punish America more than America has already been punished. Already I see a direct correlation between the continuing turmoil within the nation and our present hardline stand on amnesty. The president said long ago "We need a renewal of the spirit to meet the crisis of the spirit in our country". Is not forgiveness a vital function of the spirit?

Is there a more noble deed than for a strong, forgiving America to say to those who left, come home now? I think not.

Has there been a time when America needed more a profusion of noble deeds? I think not.

In conclusion, gentlemen, let me share with you an observation from my scores of conversations and debates on the issue. It is that it might well be impossible for those most directly involved in Vietnam to approach amnesty with objectivity and without allowing emotion to influence their position. The draft avoiders and deserters on one hand and the bereaved mothers and widows, veterans or professional soldiers on the other hand might well, and very understandably, look at amnesty from a very personal perspective.

I understand and respect this fact. From their personal perspective, as each views the issue, their individual conclusions are right and just.

EXCERPTS FROM

REMARKS OF ROBERT F. FROEHLKE
PRESIDENT OF SENTRY INSURANCE
FORMER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

BEFORE

TOWN HALL OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

JANUARY 22, 1974

Today there are three areas I wish to cover:

1. My view as to why I believe a U.S. armed force is important.
2. Why the army is the most important part of that armed force.
3. My opinions as to the kind of an army necessary in the 70's.

Before we cover these areas, however, I have two other observations.

Many people have commented that it was unusual for someone from the insurance industry to be running the U.S. Army. Others have thought it even more inconsistent that I returned in 1973 to the same insurance company I had left in 1969 rather than join a firm associated with the military-industrial complex.

I believe the move from Army to insurance business is most consistent because of the parallels between the two. In both institutions I heard carping occasionally about premiums being too high. (But never did I hear those remarks from anyone when their home was burning or when their car was involved in an accident.)

From 1969 through September, 1973, there was considerable criticism of the high cost of defense. It was a major 1972 campaign issue. But suddenly, as of October, 1973, and the Mid-East hostilities the criticism ceased and Congress rushed to ADD two billion to defense budgeting for aid to Israel rather than further paring of the budget as Congress had been debating.



The insurance-Army parallel continues as I look back on four and one half years in Defense and Army. For those years I was insuring peace.

My second point in this prologue involves Watergate and all the word stands for. It is not that I enjoy discussing Watergate for I do not. But, I have learned in talking with varied audiences that if I don't bring Watergate up half of you believe I am involved and the other half think that I am ashamed even to mention it.

How do I feel about Watergate? I have mixed emotions - all bad. One, I am terribly embarrassed. I am embarrassed because I was a part of the Nixon administration. I truly do not know who did what to whom, but obviously some high ranking members of this administration did something illegal, probably immoral and without question, very stupid.

As a part of this administration I cannot wash my hands completely, and I am embarrassed. I am also angry because I am success oriented. I went to Washington proud to be a part of this administration and I left Washington in May proud of what the administration had done the first four years.

Particularly in international affairs the administration was extremely successful. From Southeast Asia we extricated our troops and reclaimed our prisoners of war. We have renewed conversations with the Peoples' Republic of China and with the USSR. We have kept the peace in Western Europe for 28 years, the longest peace period there in over 200 years!

This is the description of a successful administration. I would enjoy having people occasionally volunteer, "Oh, you're a part of the

Nixon administration which was successful." But, I haven't heard that said since I left government.

Instead, I am a part of the administration that perpetrated Watergate. That makes me angry.

But, perhaps my key emotion is that of concern, concern for three reasons. First, I am a lawyer who is concerned about trial by press rather than trial by law. Yet, what is happening in the press must happen in a free society. I also believe the judicial process under Leon Jaworski and the Justice Department must go on to determine whether illegal acts were committed, and if they were, by whom.

Concurrently, I agree that the Ervin Committee had to conduct hearings to determine what occurred and whether legislation should be enacted to avoid a recurrence in the future. Yet, while those hearings continued certain individuals appearing before the Ervin Committee were being tried by the press.

For the dilemma I have no remedy. I do hope that every American cries a bit fully knowing that people who should be presumed innocent until proven guilty by the judicial process are being tried in the press and are assumed guilty by the vast majority of Americans. That causes me immense concern.

A second cause for concern deals with people like myself leaving successful business careers to serve their government in Washington. I had gone there in 1969 somewhat reluctantly, believing I was interrupting that career for myself. But, also, I went proudly and eagerly, the good feeling of serving one's country.

I fear there are few U. S. businessmen today proudly and eagerly going to Washington to become a part of this administration. Today, more than ever, we need good people in Washington and it is difficult attracting them there. That should concern all of us.

My third concern for Watergate deals with the trust and credibility our government has to its stockholders - the American people. In a democracy, if our government is to be successful, it must be creditable to its constituents. Because of Watergate, far too many people and certainly the majority of our young people, just don't believe what government leaders tell them.

This attitude I believe is unfair. It is unfair because, with one exception, there appears to be only one professional politician involved in Watergate. The many others are amateur zealots in the profession of politics. Why, then, should most Americans blame Watergate on the politicians? Not only is such an accusation grossly unfair; it is also unfortunate in destroying government's credibility.

Having addressed Watergate, I now wish to discuss "Why an Army?" The bald heads here in this audience - like myself - and the white-haired chaps wherever I go scoff at that question. Their attitude - don't waste your time, mister, telling ME why we need an Army. I know why.

Not so with our young people who will be helping mold public opinion for the next 40 -50 years. Especially on our college campuses, I would find among students and faculty far more opposition to an army than approval.

"Why an Army?" is a good question too because of the nature of an Army. An Army uses resources, it doesn't create them. In an energy conscious

society, if we can exist without an army we should try to do so.

My pragmatic answer has been then the U. S. needs an army because a world power has never existed without an armed force. The reply on campuses would then be, how do you know a world power can't exist without an army until we try it.

Most college students realize their life style is, indeed, affluent, dramatized by the fact alone that they are on a college campus. Only world powers can achieve the affluence of America in 1973. Give up our world power status and you give up your affluence, I have pointed out.

Another point of fact I describe to our young people is that of the three world powers - USSR, The People's Republic of China and the USA, only in America does individual freedom reign today. Do we give up our military strength today, leaving power with two totalitarian nations, neither of which has respect for the freedoms we cherish?

One pragmatic answer to "Why an Army?" which was not accepted by the young was to point out that wars have paralleled history. If there will always be wars, then shouldn't we have an army to fight those wars? The campus people, in their idealism, will not buy the belief that wars are inevitable.

I do tell them that armies do not create wars. Often they would try and blame the U. S. Army for Vietnam. Absolutely false. Civilian political leadership led us down the Vietnam path from Day One. Also, civilian political leadership made and properly sold all the decisions as to how the war should be fought in Vietnam.

That fact alone depicts the terrible unfairness for the men and women in uniform being the target of the criticism from the unthinking throughout the Vietnam era. Our military people were only following orders as the U. S. Constitution declares they must.

An Army, why? To help achieve for this world its prized goal - world peace. We realize now, after the trauma of Vietnam, that all else we desire is risked if peace is not at hand. There is no reason for an Armed Force greater than that it gives us a chance to achieve peace.

Military strength does not cause wars. But, strength matched against weakness does. A possible exception is the Middle East today where presumably near equal strength is being exhibited on both sides. But, I assure you there would have been a Middle East war long before October, 1973, if that balance of power had not been maintained.

Strength plus weakness causes war, even in a period of detente. Political scientists agree that at anytime, Detente without Defense is Delusion. It is utter delusion for the U. S. to talk with the USSR and the People's Republic of China while we are slashing our military defenses. Only through talking from strength can detente accomplish what we hope and pray is possible.

Some ask, "Do you think then that this arms race should continue?"

No, I answer. To whatever extent we can, I feel this nation should disarm. But, I think it is naive for anyone to believe disarmament should come about unilaterally. If we disarm, and again, I hope and pray we will, we should do so bilaterally or multilaterally. It would be foolish to

enter the mutual and balance force reduction talks in Vienna, or SALT talks in Helsinki with an introductory statement that regardless of the talks' outcome we will be withdrawing our forces from Europe. Or, to state at SALT talks that we are about to reduce our nuclear weapons. Such a posture can only assume curtailing disarmament on the part of the Soviets.

What is their motivation in bargaining disarmament when we're DOING unilaterally what you're TALKING about doing on a bilateral and multilateral basis? I am pro-disarmament; I am anti a senseless, naive approach which assumes only one side disarms.

Then, too, the United States has 42 international commitments which the U.S. Senate has approved. Without exception, NATO, SEATO, SENTO armed forces play a valuable role in enforcing those agreements. If we are to remain a part of the international community, then our armed forces must be equal to the tasks undertaken. To talk about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and pretend that we don't have an Army in Western Europe doesn't make sense because that Army is the cement holding NATO together.

Those are the major reasons I believe that we must have an armed force.

Now, what kind of an Army? The nuclear age in which we live tells some people that if there is to be a war, then it's going to be a nuclear war. Then all which is needed is the ability to deliver nuclear weapons.

False. First, because in my opinion there will be no nuclear war. The reason - because today the USSR and USA have parody of nuclear weapons. One side may be five percent ahead or five percent behind, but we're playing

in the same ballpark.

But, that does not assure us we will not have another war. There will always be disagreements among nations. If a powerful nation has only nuclear weaponry, then the President will have only one option in an international emergency: The ultimate weapon - the nuclear warhead.

It would be a terrible mistake for this nation's people to give their President as Commander-in-Chief of the military forces only one option - that which begins a nuclear exchange.

Then, too, nuclear weapons cannot replace the need for the foot soldier. It's a fact, the Air Force is more glamorous than the Army; the Navy life is cleaner than Army life. Yet, it is equally true that there hasn't been a war fought where the foot soldier hasn't taken and held the ground. It may not be clean nor pleasant, but someone to win a war other than a nuclear holocaust must do the ground-taking and holding.

What kind of an army is it going to be? To begin with, it's going to be a volunteer army. I am often asked, do you support the volunteer army? If I hadn't, I assure you once the Selective Service law was abolished I would have handed my resignation to the President.

Of course I supported the volunteer army concept, but with very mixed emotions.

(A digression if you will permit. The volunteer army, as I will demonstrate, invites honest, reasonable men to disagree honestly. So it is with most critical issues today.)

Before campus audiences I would raise this point, usually to the

same response from students. How can you possibly have mixed emotions or see two sides to such a simple issue? There is a right way and a wrong way to meet this issue, and here is the right way.

Confession. In four years at the Pentagon not one major issue ever came across my desk for decision where I could confidently sit back and say that we're going to do it this way and I am absolutely confident it's the right decision. I'd make the decision thinking it was right, but never really being sure.

Perhaps that is a sign of maturity, realizing there are very few easy decisions. I realize we cannot expect maturity from college students; I have been disappointed on several campuses in not finding it in their teachers.

The volunteer army was one of those tough decisions where I may well have been wrong. I THINK it's the right decision for this time. We must acknowledge that the decision to go the volunteer route now was not a military decision. It was a political decision made by civilian political leadership.

Obviously, from a military point of view, the easiest, cheapest and best way of getting people to serve their country is through the draft. The draft permits military leadership to get the exact amount of people needed at any time. The political climate during the 1968 campaign dictated that President Nixon come out for the volunteer force.

Let's look closer at the politics of the situation. We had an unfair draft, one where your children and mine were going to college. Not necessarily because of their intense hunger for a college education, but college

did provide a sure way to avoid serving one's country.

The poor, of course, were drafted and THEY served their country in Vietnam.

That comparison is, of course, an oversimplification, but one with too much truth in it. There just was no good way to defend the draft as equitable.

Then, add the political pressures of a vastly unpopular war and you easily understand why a political leadership concerned with re-election had to stop the draft. Note, however, the key question is not whether or not the Army will get enough people. Obviously we can get enough people if we lower the standards to do so. It won't, however, be an Army on which we can depend. The key question becomes, can we get enough of the right kind. I believe we will. This was not achieved in 1973 and that does concern me, although I am still not pessimistic.

The volunteer Army wrought a major change in the nation's thinking, especially young America. It would have been naive to expect overnight we would have made our task. We are chipping away at it, and I think, moving in the right direction.

The prime question remains: Mr. & Mrs. Taxpayer, are you willing to pay the Volunteer Army price in tax dollars? We know that attracting our sons and daughters, born and raised in this affluent world, is going to demand a high price.

For military life to appeal to them it must compete fairly with the socio-economic world they have known. The young recruit should find he or she can earn about as much in service as in a comparable job outside. The

soldier must now have privacy in the barracks; a varied, enticing menu.

Some of my WW II friends are quick to remember they survived three or four years Army service without these luxuries and expect their own children to do so today. Yet, they admit that like myself, they have raised their children in the affluent manner and these kids haven't been running down to the Army enlistment center on their 18th birthday.

To them the Army has looked like a step down in life style. This attitude from your sons and daughters, and mine, is fraught with danger, the danger of this nation developing an all poor, all uneducated and possibly predominantly black army. What a tragedy for a nation defined as a democracy.

Of course the U.S. Army must be a cross section of the U.S. population. The only way to achieve this is for the U.S. people to pay in tax dollars for the kind of army which appeals to a cross section of volunteers. There is, in my opinion, no short cut.

How long a volunteer army? Certainly not forever. But, it will undoubtedly take into the late 70's before this nation will have largely forgotten an unpopular war and will accept some form of universal conscription. Then, perhaps, we will steer our young people to 18 months or two years of service to their fellowman via the military, VISTA, Peace Corps or their counterparts at a substantially reduced salary from today's military pay.

I feel this is necessary for sociological as well as military defense reasons. Where else but in the army do you find an organizational melting pot for all people? Where else are young people of all racial, social, economic and educational backgrounds thrown together and told to learn

to live together, learn to understand one another, and learn to work together?

Unfortunately, in today's America this phenomenon doesn't occur in your neighborhood, your church, or your business.

Someday, these attributes of universal service may be remembered and the politicians will react to it singing the praises again of our young people serving their fellowman.

Another event will, of course, quickly end the volunteer army concept. For there is no way we could or should fight a war with a volunteer army. When a democracy goes to war, the risk of death must be shared by all its citizenry, not only a few.

Selfishness on the part of the American taxpayer may well terminate the volunteer army concept. With Vietnam only a dim memory that taxpayer may note that if we again drafted young people we could cut taxes. The opportunist politician will then see the draft as a vote-getter and support its return for the wrong reason.

What will the new Army look like? It will depend greatly on the reserve and the National Guard. In 1974, 45% of our army will be Reserve and Guard. It is difficult in many parts of this nation for the guard to appeal to our young people. There, employers are not supporting reserve training and Guard duty as they should. I don't refer to vacation time for two weeks' summer duty alone. I refer to simply acknowledging the army youngster in your plant or your office. He deserves recognition and encouragement.

The new Army must be well-equipped. The Middle East war has

demonstrated that only money buys good equipment. Lots of money. Some say to me, we are already spending more and more money on defense. My answer - we are spending less and less real dollars on defense. Note these statistics: When the Nixon Administration took office in 1969, 9.6% of the gross national product went for defense. Last year it was less than 6%. When I went to Washington, 42.6% of the total budget was defense. Last year it was about 30%.

I've heard that talk of "reordering the nation's priorities". And, we have done so! We have had a radical reshaping of our priorities.

But, responsible citizens and politicians who acknowledge that we need an army, must also note that we need a well-equipped Army. Only significant research and development monies will make it so.

I will predict a personnel breakthrough for the Army. There will be a vastly increased utilization of the ladies in that Army. Just over a year ago I announced we were going to double the number of WACS serving in the Army. Big deal. From 12,500 to 25,000. I anticipate that in the 70's we will quadruple that number for one simple reason: Quality! We can get a higher quality individual from women than from men.

I should make it perfectly clear, as someone once said, that I do not believe in women serving in the front lines. I don't want my wife or daughters serving there unless they are defending the homeland.

But front line duty is less than 10% of total job opportunities in the Army. There is little reason why good Army women cannot drive trucks, work in office jobs, as medics and 1,000 other tasks. I predict

that the Army of the later 70's will be comprised of 20 to 30 percent women. We will then have a better Army than the Army today.

As Secretary of the Army I saw my duty as to help end our involvement in the Vietnam War and bring our troops home.

This was accomplished.

I also saw my duty was to help institute the volunteer army as a viable replacement for the draft.

~~This, too, was accomplished.~~

Now, I believe as a citizen and former servant of my government I have another duty: To help heal the hurt caused by the Vietnam War. Amnesty is a giant step in that direction.

I want the American people, through the U.S. Congress, to devise a plan for amnesty.

Some may accuse me of being inconsistent as I opposed amnesty during the Vietnam War.

But, then young men were obeying the law and reporting for the draft, some being drafted and fighting and dying in Vietnam.

To those disobeying that draft law and fleeing from America we could not then say "Come home, all is forgiven."

But, why now amnesty for them? Amnesty now because the draft and the killing is over.

Amnesty now because we need to begin mending in every way possible the heartbreak and wounds left by that war. Vietnam deeply hurt America. Now is the time to heal the hurt.

Amnesty now because it is America's youth who are involved and America has always shown mercy and restraint with its young people.

Earlier I pointed out why we will probably again be drafting our young people into the Army, perhaps within four or five years. Therefore, any plan for amnesty cannot work in conflict with a successful future draft law.

There are those who plead for amnesty saying that the best of our youth ran away. Let us then welcome them back with open arms, accepting them as heroes, they ask.

But, others answer if we do that, come that next war the best will run again, whether they judge it as a moral or immoral war.

I cannot accept those on one side who say "Let the long haired radicals who ran away stay where they are. They are no good anyway."

Just as I refuse to accept those who claim the very best of our young men ran away. Make no mistake about it; the very best served their country when asked to do so.

The perimeters then run from the position of mercy and total lack of vindictiveness to the hard liners opposed to any leniency.

Somewhere between those perimeters there can be a plan for forgiveness which accomplishes the following:

- 1) It encourages those who left America to return.
- 2) It clearly states that those who left America disobeyed the law of the land and must compensate in some manner.
- 3) It clearly states that we welcome back to America, as well, those who refused to serve and chose jail instead. When we bring back our young men who ran away we must at the same time pardon those others who refused to run and chose instead a prison sentence.

- 4) It clearly states that motives for those who left are unimportant. It would be convenient, indeed, if one could devise a plan whereby those who ran away for selfish reasons were not welcomed back; those who ran for high principles could return with honor. But obviously, no such judgment is possible.

Therefore, I suggest for your consideration the following proposal. I welcome your critique. I ask that if you concur that amnesty with such a plan is possible today that here in Southern California you tell your congressman or either Senator Cranston or Senator Tunney of your opinions.

My proposal is that -

- As citizens we all begin talking about amnesty and ways to achieve that forgiveness.
- Any plan conceived must clearly state that those who fled instead of serving their country made a mistake.
- The plan must not be vindictive, but those who ran away must now serve some time in some form of national service.
- Those who serve this duty must serve long enough to perform some useful service. The time involved could vary depending upon the type of service chosen. Personally, I would settle for three months if any worthwhile duties could be found where useful service could be performed in this short of a time period.
- Those who refuse this compensatory service are not welcome to return to their country. For, if they do not wish to serve for so short and safe a term, I reluctantly conclude that their desire

to return to family and country is not strong enough.

There are perhaps over 4500 young Americans who fled the draft and the war and are living in foreign lands. Most now want to come home.

Yes, we can get along without them.

But, we really don't want to. Do we?

And we do want to heal the hurt. Don't we?

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Laird Airs Amnesty Plan Discussed During War

Scripps-Howard News Service

Former Defense secretary Melvin R. Laird revealed today that he ordered a conditional amnesty plan for draft law violators prepared while Americans still were dying in the Vietnam war.

Laird, now counselor to the President for domestic affairs, said he believes "we have always felt in this country that justice must be administered with compassion and mercy." Congress will deal with the amnesty issue before the 1976 elections, he said.

"We didn't go public with it," Laird said of the secret Pentagon amnesty discussions, "because we were in a position in which people still were being drafted and people still were dying.

"Now, for the first time in a long time, Americans aren't dying in a war."

"I THINK THERE can be some sort of service for these people," Laird said of Americans who fled from their country rather than serve in the military during the war.

"Whether that service should be in the military or in hospitals or in other areas, and whether it should be for six months or two years, I'm not prepared to say."

With these comments, Laird stepped into the amnesty controversy hardened by President Nixon, who on Jan. 31, 1973, said, "Amnesty means forgiveness. We cannot provide forgiveness for them."

In an interview with Scripps-Howard newspapers, Laird said he had former Army Secretary Robert F. Froehlke prepare a plan while American forces were engaged in the Vietnam war.

Reached in Stevens Point, Wis., where he now heads an insurance company, Froehlke said the move grew out of a series of "friendly conversations" he and Laird had on the amnesty issue while both served in the Pentagon.

"I FELT STRONGLY, and I know that Mel did too, that it didn't make any sense to talk (publicly) about amnesty while you were drafting people and kids were being killed," said Froehlke.

Now that American involvement in the fighting has ended, however, Froehlke said, he is afraid "99 percent of the American people will just forget about the problem.

"We should look at it. Now is the time," Froehlke said.

"Young people make mistakes. We should to the best of our ability forgive and forget. We can't go into this with a vindictive attitude."

Froehlke said he would be willing to back "as little as two or three months" of compensatory public service for draft law violators and military deserters who want to return home.

"Congress will deal with the issue either in this session or in the next," Laird predicted.

paved roads, was reportedly less extensive than in past years, but apparently the main reason was the rising cost of beef, not a

law making it clearly illegal for any public employe to accept any thing of value from persons he's doing business with.

Avoid Arming Africa

A disturbing situation could be in the making in East Africa, one reminiscent of the great power rivalries in Africa that marked the late '50s and early '60s. That earlier competition only brought grief to all concerned.

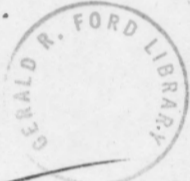
The focus now is on Ethiopia, where the Chinese are said to have offered to supply the Ethiopians with heavy arms. If the offer is accepted, it will bring Peking in direct aid rivalry with the Soviet Union, which has been supplying Ethiopia's adversary, Somalia, with assistance and arms.

The potential introduction of Chinese influence in Ethiopia ironically comes as result of a negative US response to an Ethiopian arms request. Emperor Haili Selassie's government has wanted US heavy tanks, Phantom jets and anti-aircraft missiles to offset what it said was an arms buildup in Somalia, a country which has

made claims to Ethiopian territory. The US, so far, has declined on the grounds that the arms were unneeded.

China has been making strong efforts to increase its influence in Third World African countries. It has done so successfully in Tanzania. The Russians also have been turning to East Africa as their interest in the Indian Ocean has grown.

The danger is that any open rivalry between Russia and China here almost certainly will drag in the US because of its ties to Ethiopia. If the recent past is any measure, this could prove disastrous. The last big power clash in Africa was in the Congo. It only promoted civil war and strained great power relations with little tangible results for either side. The lesson then for both the US and Russia was a tacit agreement to keep Africa free of such superpower entanglements. It is a lesson still valid today.



Move on Amnesty

As a leading businessman and a former secretary of the Army, Robert Froehlke is performing a priceless service by speaking out on amnesty for Vietnam War draft evaders.

Now president of Sentry Insurance, Froehlke proposes that amnesty be linked to some form of national service, an idea that an increasing number of Americans finds reasonable. While the time involved would depend on the type of service, Froehlke says that he would settle for three months if worthwhile duties could be performed in that short a period.

In any case, he urges movement now, and for several sound rea-

sons: We are out of Vietnam; the draft itself is over; America has always shown mercy toward its young; the nation needs to mend its wound. He also notes that if the draft is needed again in four or five years, it might then be much more difficult to work out a simultaneous amnesty plan.

Froehlke's compassionate, conciliatory tone is in marked contrast to the Nixon administration's unbudging commitment to criminal penalties. Froehlke shows that amnesty does not have to be unconditional, that it can involve atonement as well as forgiveness. There are ways, as he says, "to heal the hurt."

Lots in a Name

Libya's Col. Moammar Khadafy may be accused of inconsistency, but not of being in a rut. His last name alone can be spelled correctly in 432 ways. Using accepted methods of transliteration, the first letter can be G, Gu, K, Kh, Q or Qu; the second letter can be a or e; the third can be d, dd, dh or th; the fourth must be a, but the fifth can be f, ff or ph. The last may be i, y or ey. Possibili-

ties: 432. He doesn't do that well on policies, but he has a good start. Recently he announced merger with Tunisia, since fallen through. Before that he was after a Libya-Egypt combine, and before that, a union of Libya, Egypt, Syria and The Sudan. Still looking for a partner, Khadafy has other choices, but it's unlikely he can match the spelling possibilities of his name. He's trying though.

*Milwaukee Journal
1/28/74
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THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 1974

FORMER ARMY CHIEF SPEAKS

Froehlke's Amnesty Plan

Former Army Secretary Robert Froehlke makes good sense with his proposal for amnesty for the young men who fled this country rather than serve in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War.

Froehlke, now president of Sentry Insurance, Stevens Point, has called on the public to urge congressional representatives to adopt a "plan for forgiveness," encouraging those who left America to return.

The former secretary, who opposed amnesty during the war, said the plan must clearly state that those who fled instead of going to war made a mistake.

Also, he said, it would require some time in some form of national service involving a long enough term to accomplish something useful.

Froehlke also proposed to grant pardons to those who refused to run, choosing prison instead, when the exiles are permitted to return.

Froehlke said he opposed amnesty during the war because others were obeying the law and reporting for the draft and fighting and dying and that amnesty at such a time would have been inappropriate and morale shattering.

Now, he said, the national need is for forgiveness, compassion, and a healing of the wounds left by that most unpopular war in United States history.

"Amnesty now because the draft and the killing is over," he said. "Amnesty now because we need to begin mending in every way possible the heartbreak and wounds left by that war. Vietnam deeply hurt America. Now is the time to heal that hurt.

"Amnesty now because it is America's youth who are involved and America has always shown mercy and restraint with its young people."

There are an estimated 4,500 young Americans now living in a self-imposed exile in foreign countries, who face stiff prison sentences if they return. Most of them want to come home but not at that price.



Most of those who fled, rightly or wrongly, followed the dictates of their consciences.

One can argue, of course, that the honorable way to have defied the draft would have been to face the issue standing up and submit to prison terms as many did.

One can also argue that those who fled made their decisions and are now bound by them. But what purpose except revenge do these arguments propose?

Another argument is that if we forgive the draft dodgers and deserters now, we will encourage large scale draft dodging and desertion if a future war requires a call to arms.

We have more faith in American youth than that.

By all measures the Vietnam War was unlike any war this country has ever been involved in. It was fought at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and for the wrong reasons. Once we were bogged down in it just about every thinking person in this country wanted out of it.

If this country finds itself in a justifiable war in the future, we are confident that the youth of America will do its duty as it has throughout the history of this country, and as most of it did in Vietnam.

As Froehlke said, we can no doubt get along without the exiles but do we really want to? We do want to heal the hurt of Vietnam. Don't we?



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Evans and Novak

NIXON VS. LAIRD

WASHINGTON.

The astonishing disagreement between Richard Nixon and Melvin Laird over amnesty for Vietnam draft dodgers underscores as nothing else the President's dangerous isolation from the shrewd politician who has just ended eight frustrating months as domestic counselor.

Not only disagreement on one issue but antithetical political philosophies and noncommunication between two old allies are glaringly revealed by their conflicting response to a Veterans of Foreign Wars protest over Laird's avowed interest in "conditional amnesty."

Without consulting or informing Laird, President Nixon told the VFW his opposition to amnesty remains totally inflexible. Without consulting or informing the President, Laird told the VFW that changing conditions have modified his own earlier opposition to amnesty.

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Nothing could better demonstrate the basic incompatibility of the two men. In telling the VFW that "throughout my career of public service, I have learned to avoid absolute, dogmatic positions," Laird was implicitly contrasting Nixon's rigidity. But beyond the contrast, the VFW correspondence revealed the degree to which the President had simply stopped talking to his domestic counselor.

With U. S. forces no longer fighting in Vietnam, Laird has long felt something must be done about 30,000 to 40,000 young men who fled this country to escape the draft. He said nothing to the President, but in a Jan. 5 interview

with a Scripps-Howard reporter he suggested amnesty for the exiles in return for "some sort of service" to their country.

Reading that interview, the VFW hierarchy was outraged. On Jan. 7, National Commander Ray R. Soden sent Nixon a smoldering letter which reiterated the VFW's "total and unremitting opposition to any form of amnesty." He expressed "shock and a deep sense of betrayal" over Laird's new position, adding that he considers Laird's "actions and apparent sentiments" about amnesty "to be unconscionable" and "a break of faith both with you and with the strong men and women who served, suffered, and in 57,000 cases, died." Soden's request: "a personal reaffirmation from you on this matter."

Rapid correspondence not being the strong suit of the Nixon White House, no reply was sent the VFW until Jan. 23. During those 16 days, Nixon did not seek out Laird, target of the VFW rage. Nor did he consult counselor Bryce Harlow or the Domestic Council's staff.

Instead, staffers who routinely handle correspondence checked the President to make certain he still opposed amnesty in any form.

He did. His Jan. 23 letter to Soden, not released to the press, reaffirmed his stand. "The few who refused to serve or deserted their country," he wrote, "must pay a penalty for their choice . . . We cannot provide forgiveness for them . . . The price is a criminal penalty." That, the President added, "still reflects my view." He shrugged off "recent reports in the press which have been attributed to others," without a gesture at defending Laird.

Laird did a quiet burn after receiving a carbon copy of the VFW's letter to Nixon. An old Navy man who won a Purple Heart and rose from the ranks to become an officer during World War II, VFW member Laird used Navy language to grumble that the VFW had "put a comrade on report."

On Monday, Jan. 28, beginning his last week at the White House, Laird sent his own letter to Soden. "Neither the political system nor the judicial system of the United States works on 'blanket' and arbitrary approaches," he wrote. ". . . We pride ourselves on administering justice with mercy and understanding." While opposing general amnesty, he proposed a case-by-case approach.

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During Laird's White House tenure, he never discussed this with the President. Neither has anybody else high White House officials told us. Nixon is not only isolated from the outer world but sealed off from his own staff's uncongenial advice. Knowing his revulsion for advice contradicting his own axioms, his aides protect themselves by holding their tongues.

Thus, President Nixon is probably wholly unaware of bipartisan feeling in Congress that something eventually must be done about amnesty, a feeling fully perceived not only by Laird but, more importantly, also by Vice President Ford. As Representative of Michigan's 5th Congressional District, Ford answered mail by suggesting conditional amnesty—that is, for violators who put in substitute service for their country.

Laird, leaving the White House with his store of political wisdom sadly untapped by the President, has said Ford will now assume many of his duties. Ford is also sensitive to political trends and the need for flexibility. But whether he will prove to be one small whit more successful than the unusually articulate Laird in getting through to the President is extremely doubtful.

