

The Harris Survey

PARDON CRITICIZED

For Release: February 24, 1977

By Louis Harris

A 46-42% plurality of Americans opposes the pardon President Carter issued for draft evaders during the war in Vietnam.

A 52-38% majority gave the new President a negative rating on his handling of the pardon issue.

In this latest survey of 1,466 adults, Mr. Carter is criticized both by those who oppose and those who favor outright amnesty. By giving draft evaders a pardon rather than amnesty, he antagonized amnesty supporters who resent the implication of guilt in the pardon, while anti-amnesty advocates see little difference between the ideas of pardon and outright amnesty.

Sentiment against amnesty in the country is now running 61-26%, up from 56-30% recorded in 1974. An alternative plan of giving amnesty to draft evaders who fulfill some form of national service for two years is slimly rejected by 45-41%. However, in 1974 a 45-43% plurality favored such an alternative service plan.

A 46-31% plurality rejects the argument that "by giving a pardon, President Carter is making those who refused to serve admit they did wrong, whereas amnesty would have been the right thing to do."

It is evident that with the passage of time public opinion in this country is hardening against draft evaders.

A solid 61-27% majority of the public feels that "it is unfair to the men who died in combat in Vietnam and to those who suffered as POWs just to let draft evaders get off like that." And 43-38% do not agree that "other Presidents in the past have issued an amnesty after other wars, so that it is only right to issue a pardon over Vietnam."

The best public feeling President Carter is able to generate is on the issue of "burying the past"; a 46-43% plurality admit that he "was right to issue the pardon so that Vietnam could be left behind us in the past."

The following sectors of the population show strong support for the Carter pardon: 54-38% in the West; 55-35% among those under 30; 53-26% among blacks; 50-42% among the college educated; 50-39% among Carter voters.

But the pardon is opposed in the President's native South by 51-34%; among those 50 years of age and over by 51-34%; among those of high school education by 50-37%, and among former President Ford voters by 62-30%.

Whatever the present controversy, the President's decision on the draft evaders does not seem to have had the same shock effect as Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon, and it is unlikely to be a permanent disability for the new President, as the Nixon pardon was for President Ford.

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TABLES

Earlier this month, the Harris Survey asked the cross section: "President Carter has issued a pardon for those who left the country and refused to serve in the armed forces during the war in Vietnam, except for deserters from the armed forces. Do you approve or disapprove of this pardon by President Carter?"

CARTER PARDON OF DRAFT EVADERS

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Not Sure</u> %
NATIONWIDE	42	46	12
By Region			
East	39	47	14
Midwest	45	45	10
South	34	51	15
West	54	38	8
By Age			
18-29	55	35	10
30-49	39	51	10
50 and over	34	51	15
By Education			
8th grade	36	42	22
High School	37	50	13
College	50	42	8
By Race			
White	40	49	11
Black	53	26	21
By vote in 1976			
Ford	30	62	8
Carter	50	39	11

"A pardon implies that they were guilty but are now free from penalty. Total amnesty would imply that there was no guilt. Would you favor or oppose giving total amnesty to those men who left the country and refused to serve in the armed forces during the Vietnam War?"

TOTAL AMNESTY FOR DRAFT EVADERS

	<u>Total Public</u> %
Favor	26
Oppose	61
Not Sure	13

"Would you favor giving amnesty to those who left the country and refused to serve in the armed forces during the war in Vietnam if they had to spend two years in some form of national service other than military, or don't you feel that would be right?"

AMNESTY WITH ALTERNATIVE SERVICE

	<u>Total Public</u>	
	<u>1977</u> %	<u>1974</u> %
Favor amnesty	41	45
Don't feel that's right	45	43
Not sure	14	12

TABLES (cont'd)

"Now let me read you some statements some people have made about the pardon President Carter has issued for Vietnam draft evaders. For each, tell me if you tend to agree or disagree?"

STATEMENTS ABOUT CARTER PARDON

	<u>Agree</u> %	<u>Disagree</u> %	<u>Not Sure</u> %
It is unfair to the men who died in combat in Vietnam and to those who suffered as POWs to just let draft evaders get off like that	61	27	12
By giving a pardon, President Carter is making those who refused to serve admit they did wrong, whereas amnesty would have been the right thing to do	31	46	23
Other Presidents in the past have issued an amnesty after other wars so it is only right to issue a pardon over Vietnam	38	43	19
President Carter was right to issue the pardon so that Vietnam could be left behind us in the past	46	43	11

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