Carter drafting a pardon: a necessary action

By Glenn Brownstein

For me, the climax came the day of the Kent State Massacre in 1970, when my ninth grade history teacher, Mr. Goldberger, walked slowly into the classroom. He had just attended the funeral of a young man who could not teach today... not after what happened... and then sat down at his desk, head in hands, until one of my classmates broke the prolonged silence by saying, "Can we go home now?"

I also recall the student demonstrations in Chicago at the 1968 Democratic convention. It was at that time that I first realized a necessity for change. And as the war dragged on, I became more and more aware of the fact that the American people were tired of the war.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

Now that President Carter has taken the decisive and necessary first step of pardoning draft evaders, it's constructive before we look over our shoulders and begin the necessary second step of looking at the real world.

The major problem with Carter's action is that it is discriminatory. It pardons the middle-class kids who went to Canada or Sweden, but ignores the boys who maintained a conscience. This is not what we need. This is a war of necessity, and it is more important to consider the American people who have perished.

Most Americans now regret our past involvement in Vietnam. The college campuses during the October 15 moratorium. I remember canvassing my neighborhood with anti-war literature, but also recalled seeing people lining up to go to Canada if I was drafted, a very real thought for a 17-year-old.

Through the late sixties and early seventies, the college campuses were wracked by riots in 1970, and during the near-nationwide student strike, in the spring of 1971, MIT made all classes optional to accommodate the protesters who numbered at least one-third of the student body.

This is an action that many leaders appeared to approve of. Had it been under Ford's request for more defense spending to "meet the Soviet threat," while citing Henry Kissinger as someone who does not "see the point of "nuclear supremacy." Two comments are necessary at this point. The first is that more defense spending does not translate directly into more nuclear arms. In fact, while our lead is diminishing, everyone concludes that the US still has a comfortable edge in terms of strategic nuclear weapons. What we need now is a flexible and adequate conventional capability, and it is on those grounds that much of our defense expenditure is and ought to be justified. Second, Henry Kissinger leaves much to be desired as an observer of the strategic balance, considering his well-known position on the decline of the West, and triumph of the Soviets. If I believed that the US could not endure for a significant length of time, I too would oppose expenditures on nuclear weapons, on the grounds that they are a waste of money for a nation doomed to defeat.

Lester L. Warner, Merrick T. Mosk, Gary P. Fredrickson, Thomas A. Price and Ernest L. Ruby are among the students who were wounded in action, and to the others who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men.

And when they were—usually not older than 19 or 20, but called on to fight—a war that some politicians and military commanders tried to portray as being a war of necessity, I began to think not only about what you might have done if you had been drafted, but also about what actually happened to those who resisted in one form or another, to those who served and returned, to those who served and died or were wounded in action, and to the relative responsibility of all of the affected young men. 