

Vietnam Veterans Against the War - Winter Soldier Organization

NEWSLETTER

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Newsletter -

Due to the National Steering Committee and the getting out of the minutes and catching up on letterwriting and distributing the newspaper and the stickers and posters for the demonstrations in Washington, we are sending out this abbreviated newsletter. The next regular newsletter will appear in two weeks. Hope you understand!!!

Lawton/Gardner Up-Date

Enclosed with this mailing is a pamphlet entitled "The Case of Gary Lawton and Zurebu Gardner." This pamphlet was recently published by the National Office and is designed to serve as a comprehensive case history of the frame-up. It should not be used as a mass educational tool, but will serve as a good source for chapters doing propaganda and publicity work around the trial. We have more copies available, but if chapters are interested in ordering, try to keep your orders to a realistic assessment of what you can use and the nature of this pamphlet.

On Friday, April 19th, more than 100 Riverside community members jammed the courtroom to hear William Kunstler and Mark Rosenbaum (of ACLU) ask the court to drop all charges against Gary and Zurebu and to turn over to the defense all government evidence gained from "electronic surveillance" and illegal wiretaps. Kunstler argued that the charges against Lawton and Gardner be dropped, stating that another retrial would violate their constitutional right to equal protection under the law and due process on the basis of racial discrimination. He noted that retrials in cases of hung juries are scheduled almost exclusively for members of minority groups. In the written motion, the attorneys sighted the fact that charges against Lawton and Gardner have been unresolved for over two years. They also pointed to numerous changes in testimony of prosecution witnesses between the first and second trial.

Riverside Superior Court Judge Francis Estudillo delayed his decision on ordering the charges dismissed indefinitely, but set an April 26th date for his decision on the wiretap motion. These motions are very important to the freedom of Gary and Zurebu and it would be a major victory if the third trial is stopped before it begins. People should continue to write letters demanding that the charges be dropped to the three people listed on the back of the enclosed pamphlet. We will continue to do up-dates on the status of these motions, while continuing to demand that justice be done.

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Build the Demo!!!

Enclosed in this mailing are a poster and sticker printed for use to build the Washington DC (July 1-4) demonstration. These are to be used by you to plaster up around town in order to help get the word out about the demonstration. The posters were done on newsprint and take very well to a little mixture of PET milk on the front and back. The stickers were made to print on both sides, therefore it is imperative that you apply a lot of water to the sticky side in order to insure that it will stay up. Because of the small size of the paper, we put our address on it. Several regions are going to make little stickies with their address to put next to it, or you could take a small address stamp and put it over the little blank space. If there was more room we would have left a space for yours. Sorry.

Both these items should prove to be invaluable to you in advertizing for the demo. Posters and stickers have been sent to regional offices already. We did 50,000 posters and 100,000 stickers. If you run out of your supply, please let us know and we will do up another batch. They were fairly expensive, so if you could donate some dollars (\$\$\$) it would be appreciated!!

There has been a lot of interest from other organizations to see that this demonstration is a success. We think that it is important that contacts be made with local groups that you work with. We envision thousands of people at the demonstration and feel that each chapter must do their part in building for it. Columbus, Ohio has set a goal of 500 people and Milwaukee, Wisconsin set their goal at 300 and already has 25 for sure people going!! New York City chapter has been working with many veteran organizations, and the interest among these groups to attend is growing steadily.

At the National Steering Committee Meeting the demonstration demands were discussed and placed in order. They are: Universal and Unconditional Amnesty For All War Resisters; Implement the Agreements/End All Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol; A Single Type Discharge for All Veterans; Decent Benefits for All Veterans; and Kick Nixon Out!!

The political importance of this demonstration should be evident to all. The continuing war in Indochina, the economic and political upheavals and the shoddy treatment of veterans makes the Washington demonstration come at a time when the people of this country can see the decay of this nation's government and system most clearly. By demonstrating in Washington and by doing follow up work locally we can point this out. In order to do this most effectively it will take ALL of us to build for the demo!!

One of the building actions will be the regional demonstrations that are taking place on the weekend of May 17-18. The importance of these building actions was discussed at the NSCM and all agreed that these actions would be crucial in building for Washington. Let us know what your plans are as soon as possible.

BUILD THE DEMO!!!

BUILD VVAW/WSO!!!

Verdict Reached on "Garment Factory 14" at Starke Prison

Winter Soldier has, in the past, carried a couple of articles on the situation at Starke Prison in Florida. Last April 30th, in the garment factory, 4 prison officials attacked one of the inmates. Approximately 95 inmates were in the factory at the time, and 41 remained in the factory during the beating; the others fled when it was believed that prison guards were coming into the factory. All of the 41 brothers who remained were placed in maximum security (all of them are black). 14 of these brothers were subsequently charged with arson, assault and riot, and have come to be known as the "Garment Factory 14."

Early in March, these brothers were finally taken to court. In the first series of trials, the proceedings for two brothers lasted over one week. This informed the county of Bradford that they could not just railroad these brothers and they would have to go through the full procedure before obtaining any convictions. Also, there were many conflicts of evidence that developed throughout the trial which indicated that the majority of the 14 were innocent.

The ultimate result was that one person, Nathaniel Pressley, was found guilty as charged. A second brother, James Edwards, was found guilty of a lesser charge. Three other prisoners plead guilty to a single charge of riot with a maximum penalty of five years so that the charges against the remainder of the '14' would be dropped. This act of courage is keeping the brothers out of the hole! At this time, attorneys are in the process of appealing the convictions of Pressley and Edwards, and an appeal in regard to the change of venue motion which was previously filed is being prepared which will cover the guilty pleas of the other convicted brothers. We will continue to keep people informed on these appeals of the Garment Factory 14.



Security Form Enclosed

Enclosed is a security report form which all chapters should have on hand. As was discussed at the Milwaukee NSCM, it is extremely important that people report any and all police harassment, FBI contacts, etc. to the National Office as soon as possible after the incident occurs. We hope this form will help people to be more consistent about getting their reports in to us. The form is self-explanatory and simple to follow. We hope that people will take these forms and the government harassment we have been subject to with a great deal more seriousness than has been done in the past. Part of this seriousness is making sure that the National Office is notified of all security incidents. Let us know if more forms are needed.

Borden Strike in Columbus, Ohio -

In the latest issue of WINTER SOLDIER, (enclosed with this mailing), there is an article on a strike at the Columbus Coated Fabrics plant owned by the Borden Co. We received a letter from the Columbus chapter of VVAW/WSO informing us that the strike is becoming critical and that support is needed around the country. The following are excerpts from the letter we received.

"The company has begun what they call Phase II... of their equipment removal from the CCF Plant. The strangle hold that Borden is putting on the Columbus community is becoming more... apparent with threats of not only pulling that plant out of town but also not opening their new national office building that is still under construction in downtown Columbus.

"All the indications we have point to the obvious conclusion that Borden is attempting economic blackmail on the city of Columbus... We are currently working... directly with the union, the citizens committee for justice for the strikers, with the student committee for support, through the Columbus Tenant's Union...

"VVAW/WSO is in the position to spit in the eye of Bordens on a national level. With your cooperation at National, perhaps we can get as many chapters to call news conferences calling for a nationwide boycott as and where possible. This has to be done as soon as possible given the critical situation here. We will get all information out as soon as possible, such as leaflets and... updates on the situation. Borden products are everywhere. Bordens also has its hands in the pockets of all the people of the world such as factories in Costa Rica, Brazil, Asia, Scandinavian countries, West Germany, etc. We are just beginning to realize the size of the... multi-national monopoly capitalist company we are up against. We would appreciate anything you and the rest of the organization can do to strike a blow against Bordens."

The workers at the Borden plant in Columbus are fighting for their lives, and are drawing the support of the entire city of Columbus. If any chapter can help in publicizing this strike they should do so. Together we can win!! For more information read the article in WS and write to VVAW/WSO, PO Box 10116, Columbus, OH 43201.

Request for Chapter Address Up-Date

We are planning to do an up-date of the chapter list within the next few weeks. There have been many changes, particularly in regional offices, so it is time to compile an up-dated list which will be sent to all chapters. We would ask that regions send us their chapter lists as soon as possible, so that we can make sure we have the correct addresses when our list is compiled. Do it today!

International Worker's Day -

In the enclosed issue of WINTER SOLDIER there is an article on International Workers Day. It gives a brief history on the nature of the day. There will be demonstrations and celebrations on May 1 or May 4th (Saturday) around the country and we urge all chapters to find out and participate in these, the people's working day celebrations. The government calls this day Law and Order Day, in an effort to play down the importance of showing the international solidarity of working people. Don't be fooled; join in the celebrations and let us know what you have done on this day.