

Vietnam Veterans Against the War-Winter Soldier Organization

NEWSLETTER

number 38



Aug 12, 75

General Information

Veterans Day National Actions

At the Milwaukee National Steering Committee Meeting, the organization voted to hold national actions on Veterans Day, 1975. These actions are to be held on the chapter or regional level and should coincide with the "official" Veterans Day of the states the actions are to be held in. (The federal "holiday" is on November 11th, but in some states, Vets Day is observed on October 28th).

During the national meeting, we discussed how it is a mistake to just gear up the "demo machine" and hold a demonstration on a chosen date. We have made the error in the past of not tying in our day-to-day work among vets with our demonstrations and this has meant that our actions were often isolated and not speaking to the real needs and struggles of vets. As VVAW/WSO grows and more effectively links up with the daily struggles of vets, it is increasingly important that mass actions such as demonstrations speak directly to the needs of vets. Vets Day, 1975 should be such a time for chapters and regions to build militant mass actions which are directly tied in to the daily work we are doing at the VA, unemployment offices, campuses, etc.

We must go all out for building Veterans Day actions this year. This is the most important national action we have planned for the immediate future, but there is sufficient time to build for these actions. These should be actions which vets see as our own, and they should be actions which effectively direct the anger and militance of vets toward their oppression.

Some chapters have already begun planning and building for Vets Day. Those chapters who have not begun this kind of work should begin in the near future so as to allow maximum time for really mobilizing people to attend the actions. This doesn't mean that we should simply crank up the "demo machine" and put the demos around Vets Day in the forefront at all times. What it does mean is that our mass work should begin pointing towards the Vets Day actions. The demos should be built in the course of our daily work. For example, the St. Louis chapter has had a petition campaign going at the VA for the past couple of months. The chap-

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ter has decided that the petition campaign should culminate on Veterans Day when a demonstration will be held and the petitions will be presented to the VA. This allows the chapter enough time to gather hundreds of signatures on their petitions and the petitions are also pointing to something in the future (i. e. a demonstration that will move the struggle to a higher level). Presenting the petitions on Vets Day also provides time for meetings with the vets who have signed the petitions for the purpose of mobilizing people to come to the Vets Day actions, as well as consolidating vets who are interested in joining the chapter.

Between now and Veterans Day, we should be building our demonstrations on a daily basis. We should be talking about Vets Day in our mass work, as well as at special events such as benefits, programs, picket lines, etc. An example of how this is being done is the work going on in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee chapter is busily working to build for the Labor Day parade and rally which is coming up on September 1st. At the Labor Day rally, the VVAW/WSO speaker will be talking about Veterans Day and bringing out the fact that it is important to take to the streets on this day. They are also going to print up several thousand stickers talking about the Vets Day demonstration and plaster them all over the city. This kind of thing can begin immediately and it is also something which new people can get involved in right away.

Our mass work should be pointing toward Veterans Day, but not in such a way that is isolated from our daily work and from the struggles of vets. Our Vets Day actions should serve to build the struggles we are involved in and move these struggles to a higher level. Vets Day around the country should speak to the needs of vets -- both as presented in our national program, and how that program is being implemented locally through various campaigns, struggles, etc. Powerful Vets Day actions can play an important role in building a fighting vets movement if they are actions which speak directly to what vets are struggling around. So, let's get out there and build the demonstrations, deepen and strengthen our work among the masses of vets, and continue to build the vets movement!

ALL OUT FOR VETERANS DAY!!!

Postal Workers Struggle Continues

At the last NSCM, we decided to give all possible support to building the struggle of the Postal workers whose contract expired on July 20th. Most chapters took up that fight, either going to the Postal workers with leaflets, WINTER SOLDIER, or the pamphlet put out by the Good Contract Committee, or by going to the National Guard and Reserves with the VVAW/WSO national leaflet. Many chapters did both.

The PO workers struggle did not end with the sell-out by the union bosses in Washington just after the old contract expired; instead, it shifted to a fight against the contract, and a struggle by the Postal workers against ratification of the contract. One of the major parts of the fight for a good contract was the de-

mand of the workers that the no-layoff clause in the old contract be maintained, despite the attempts of the Postal Corporation to say that they couldn't survive with that in the contract. There was a victory on this, since the union hack bosses knew the rank and file would not stand for them giving in on this point. But this was not any sort of total victory. First, it simply retained what was already in the contract -- held ground, basically -- and second, the Postal Corporation is already getting rid of up to 100,000 workers a year through not hiring new workers to replace those who retire, are fired, or whatever. But the wages part of the agreement is ridiculous; in an economy where inflation eats up at least 8-12% per year of the paycheck, workers got a 4% per year raise over a three-year period. And through a productivity clause, new speedup devices such as the Kokomo Plan (see the last WINTER SOLDIER) will be taken to arbitration -- that is, a board which will serve the interests of the Postal Corporation.

Workers are fighting against the ratification. And our task is to work with that struggle. The contract was sent to the Postal workers on the weekend of August 9th, and we can be sure that union hacks around the country are pushing for ratification. If the contract is not ratified, then a strike is almost a certainty, and we must support it -- both by getting out to the workers and increasing our work with the Guard and Reserves which may be used as scabs.

The following is a report from the Milwaukee chapter on their work during the first phase of the Postal workers struggle, and points out the need for us to have a clear understanding of the role of VVAW/WSO in the struggle and the ability to make that role clear to other groups we are working with.

The Milwaukee chapter of VVAW/WSO linked up with the local MILWAUKEE WORKER. The WORKER was asked by the National Committee of Postal Workers for a Good Contract to coordinate the work and to help draw Milwaukee and surrounding suburban Postal workers in to a committee. We called for a meeting of VVAW/WSO and the WORKER to deepen our understanding of the Postal workers struggle and to figure out a rational division of labor, so as to best put our resources and organizational responsibilities in order and build the Postal workers struggle. One problem that arose at this meeting was that the local WORKER people did not grasp the individual role that VVAW/WSO as a vets organization had to play at the Post Office. They saw us more as just extra people to be used as leafleters and playing the full part as the organizer of the Reserves and National Guard. This view on their part changed when VVAW/WSO people were consistently at the PO building the struggle of the Postal workers.

As a whole, the main PO and 10 sub-stations were leafletted with the national PO worker leaflet and WINTER SOLDIER was also distributed at many of these locations. We made contact with 40 workers. Although there was not a committee formed, we viewed this as a success. The reason for not getting a committee started was basically that there is no history of contact or struggle with the PO workers from either VVAW/WSO or the MILWAUKEE WORKER. There was also some confusion on following up contacts as to whether VVAW/WSO should follow them up or just let the WORKER do it.

Consistently going down the PO with the same teams of people did a lot toward building the unity and gaining the confidence of the Postal workers. However, this will only deepen through the process of struggle.

National Guard and Reserve Work

Through the use of the national leaflet around the Postal workers struggle, many chapters have been out to Guard and Reserve units during the past month. During the NSCM, there was much uninformed discussion on the Guard and Reserves until we finally reached the conclusion that we needed more investigation. While work since then has not been extensive in most places, chapters should be getting a beginning grasp on the answers to some of the questions discussed at the NSCM (see the minutes from the meeting). When these beginning sum-ups are done, they should be sent to the NO. Chapters should also be considering whether a low-key but consistent campaign around the National Guard and Reserves is something which should be undertaken (leafletting once a month at meetings, for instance). There will be a discussion of our work with Guard and Reserves at the NIC meeting.

National Interim Committee Meeting

At the last NSCM, the organization adopted a new working paper which is now the by-laws of the organization. An important part of this working paper is the establishment of a National Interim Committee (NIC) -- a decision-making body which is to meet every 2-3 months between NSCMs. This body is to make decisions within the overall program and policies set by the National Steering Committee and is to provide a means by which we can better sum up work, respond to changing conditions, and further move the work of the organization ahead.

The definite place and date for the upcoming NIC meeting has not yet been set, but word on this will be going out to all chapters within the next few weeks. However, regions should begin discussing the NIC meeting (which will be held in either late September or early October) and choosing their NIC representatives. According to the working paper, each region has two delegates to the NIC which are to be elected at regional meetings for a term of six months. At least one person on regional leadership must be elected to serve both on the regional and national level (NIC, NSCM). One of the NIC representatives for the region must be one of the delegates to the NSCM in order to provide continuity between those bodies. Voting at the NIC meeting is to be handled the same way as is voting at the NSCM.

The National Office has begun discussing the upcoming NIC meeting and some of the things which NIC representatives should be prepared to discuss. As at the NSCM, one of the most important things we have to do is continue to sum-up the work of the chapters so as to further move this work ahead. The second draft of the Program pamphlet will soon be sent out to regions and the discussion at the

NIC meeting should focus around this Program pamphlet (as it did at the NSCM). Other items that regions should be thinking about for discussion at the NIC meeting are: changing the name of the organization, work being done to build for the national actions on Veterans Day, summation of work done around the struggle of the Postal workers and discussion of work done with Reserves and National Guard around this struggle, problems of funding the National Office and organization as a whole, and the Bicentennial. Also, as decided at the NSCM, nominations for National Office will be taken at the NIC meeting so regions should be thinking about possibilities for future national coordinators. A tentative agenda for the meeting will be sent out in the future by the host chapter, but these are some of the ideas we have already come up with that regions should begin dealing with in preparation for the meeting.

VVAW/WSO has never before had a NIC, which is a national leadership body. Because of this, there should also be some discussion of the purpose and tasks of the NIC at the upcoming meeting. Having a NIC should help us to more thoroughly and more consistently sum up our work on the national level and we need to get a good handle on how the NIC can best help VVAW/WSO continue to build the fighting veterans movement.

Discharge Upgrading Centers to be Established Around Country

Beginning November 1, 1975, the military will be establishing Discharge Review Boards at various locations around the country. Separate areas have been established by the different branches (see below). These centers will deal only with discharges that must go before the Discharge Review Boards. They will not facilitate appeals under Article 69 (an appeal provision for cases not reviewed under the Court of Military Review -- COMA). Additionally, they will not be regionalizing Boards for Correction of Military Records or be giving jurisdiction for higher appeals in the Federal Court Districts where the local DRBs are being established.

The local boards are being established on a temporary basis and will be discontinued in areas where there isn't a substantial case load. The officers that will make up the boards will be traveling around the country and holding sessions at the convenience of the military and not the people wishing to have their discharges upgraded. The military information service has made it clear that these areas where boards are being set up are not part of a "regionalization" process and people who are presently residing or have resided in any of the locations where boards are established need not go to the board in their area. They can go to any of the locations of their respective service.

While most chapters are not practicing DUP procedures, they can refer people with less-than-honorable discharges to these centers. Politically, the demand around "Single Type Discharge for All Vets" can now take on added significance in areas where chapters or regions will have a discharge review board in their area. The establishment of these locations gives chapters the opportunity to bring the demand out of the abstract and give it real application in the respective communities.

Additional information as to location, time of establishment and schedules, etc, can be obtained from the Military Information Officer in Washington, DC at (202) OX5-0625.

The location of the boards for the various services are:

AIR FORCE

St. Louis, Missouri
Houston, Texas
San Francisco, California

ARMY

Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Indiana
Ft. Carson, Colorado
Presidio, California

NAVY (AND MARINE CORPS)

Great Lakes Training Ctr, Illinois
New Orleans, Louisiana
Treasure Island, California

VVAW/WSO Resigns from NCUUA

After having been in the National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty (NCUUA) since it was founded in May of 1973, we resigned from the coalition at the latest NSCM in July. The NSC voted to do so on the recommendation and proposal of the National Office.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the letter that was written to NCUUA about our resignation. We feel that the letter hits on the main points for withdrawing from the coalition. The struggle to win a universal and unconditional amnesty is an important one. We no longer feel that NCUUA is capable of leading that struggle as it has all too often taken the reformist road in its approach to amnesty work. Even after we have struggled within the coalition, its national office has not put into practice the decisions that we adopted at the coalition Steering Committee. This does not serve the interests of those in need of amnesty. To continue to remain in the coalition would in effect lend our support to the reformist politics put forward within the coalition. We cannot rely on Congress to win amnesty, but we must rely on the masses of people.

We see that the chapters will and can work for a universal and unconditional amnesty by relying on the masses of veterans and by working with local organizations. As the threat of a new, imperialist war continues to grow, the essence of the amnesty struggle takes deeper roots in the mass struggle. We also see that as the vets struggle grows and as we wage a battle for a single-type discharge, again, we can raise the demand of UUA for All War Resisters.

We have communicated with several organizations of exiles in Canada and in Europe about our resignation from the coalition. While some of the exiles agree that to remain in the coalition is futile, others think that while the coalition puts forward bankrupt politics, we should have stayed in it and continue to struggle. We will continue to struggle with those who feel we have made an error by pointing out that our main task is to unite with the mass struggle -- not tail behind reformist organizations who have consciously subverted the movement for a total amnesty.

*** REGIONAL REPORTS ***

Up-Date on Work in Chicago

As reported in the last national newsletter (#37), the Chicago chapter has been working around the case of Joe Blanco in fighting to see that he gets 100% disability. Since that newsletter, the campaign has been moving forward, becoming broader in scope and uniting more and more with the masses of vets. This report is just a brief update on what is happening now.

At first, when we took Joe's case out to the GED school he attended and some other GED classes, we made the error of not uniting with the day-to-day oppression that the vets at these classes were facing. That is, many (if not all) of the vets at these schools have not been getting their VA checks on time -- sometimes as late as 6 or 7 months. They are mad about this and want to fight back, but we made the error of trying to pull them into the Joe Blanco campaign without unfolding that campaign from the question of their late checks.

We have now corrected this error and have started going out to the GED classes that exist all over the city and are raising the demand of WE WANT OUR CHECKS NOW! At the same time, we are unfolding the work around Joe Blanco from the question of late checks, and then bringing out the demand for DECENT BENEFITS and the crisis of the system.

In order to focus the campaign even more, we developed a petition that has three demands on it -- 100% DISABILITY FOR JOE BLANCO, WE WANT OUR CHECKS NOW, and DECENT BENEFITS FOR ALL VETS. Instead of seeing the petition as an end in itself, we see it as a tool for building the struggle, bringing the demands out to the masses of vets and winning their support for the campaign. We use this petition at the VA, which we try to be at for several hours at least 3 times a week, and we also use the petition when we go to the GED schools.

The petition has really helped move our work forward, providing a concrete tool that we can use in addition to taking out WINTER SOLDIER and a leaflet explaining what we are doing. We have not yet summed up the campaign's use of the petition and how to move off of it at this time. However, we can see in the coming months that more militant actions will take place to put the heat on the VA.

Already, because of the pressure we have placed on the VA, Joe has been called by one of the local hacks trying to sweet-talk him -- not promising him 100% disability, but saying they would get him to a good doctor. We see this as a small victory because it shows that the VA is scared and that we have placed them on the defensive.

This report is brief and many aspects of our work and the campaign have been left out. We hope to get together a better and more comprehensive summation for the upcoming NIC meeting. We think it would help us and all the other chapters if people come to the NIC meeting with written summations of work.

Milwaukee Chapter Labor Day March and Picnic

Milwaukee VVAW/WSO, along with other organizations in the city, are building for a March on Labor Day. A benefit dinner with films and theater, scheduled for August 17th, will both raise money for the chapter and build for the Labor Day actions. Under the slogans "Jobs or Income Now" and "Victory to the Meatcutters," the march will continue to build unity with Local 248 of the Meatcutters, whose 750 members have been on strike (see the April-May WINTER SOLDIER) and who are under attack by big business (even the VA has gotten into the act by trying to herd scabs in to help break the strike). The Labor Day events will take place on September 1st and other chapters of VVAW/WSO are invited to attend this event which the Milwaukee chapter has helped to build for the past several years.

Work with Methadone Patients in New York City

The following is taken from the New York City chapter newsletter and is a run-down on the chapter's activities with a group of methadone patients who are struggling against the methadone program at the Ft. Hamilton VA hospital in NYC. This article is not a detailed analysis of the work of the chapter, but is a run-down of the struggle and activities VVAW/WSO has been involved in. A summation of the work of the chapter around the methadone struggle will be coming out later.

"Within the past months oppressive conditions at the Ft. Hamilton VA Hospital methadone clinic gave birth to VETPAC (Veteran-Patient Advisory Committee). VETPAC is a group of Vietnam veterans caught up in the drug plague who feel and know the need to defend themselves against the abusive and discriminatory practices at the Ft. Hamilton VA Hospital.

"Most of the veterans on the program want to get off drugs, particularly methadone, which is far more addicting than heroin and has many serious side effects. They also want some control over the program they are involved in and they are fighting the conditions and treatment (or lack of it) of patients in the hospital. One of their major demands is the dismissal of the doctor who runs the clinic. Numerous statements of malpractice have been signed by patients against this doctor. And during the last few months, five patients on the program have died.

"VETPAC's first demonstration was held on June 13th in front of the hospital, and raised demands to fire the head doctor, end discrimination against clinic patients at the hospital, and institute changes in the program so that people can be rehabilitated there -- not just strung out on another drug while the VA offers them a pool table instead of help in getting a job. Around 75 vets from the program took part in the demo.

The VA's response was to retaliate by forcing 4 vets onto administrative detox who had taken part in the demo. This means they are thrown off the program with only 21 days to detox, which is not enough and can be dangerous to the vets very life.

"This didn't stop the VETPAC brothers in their fight against the VA. These brothers are fighting for decent benefits like VVAW/WSO and workers everywhere. They demand to know how there can be deaths on the program when people are supposedly under medical care. They demand to know the dosage they are getting and why acupuncture, which vets have found very good, isn't used for detox.

"June 27th, VETPAC held a second demo with the main focus of an end to reprisals and to all discrimination against clinic patients in the hospital. VVAW/WSO was there and that week helped inform other vets throughout the city about the struggle in Brooklyn.

"There have been several meetings between VETPAC and hospital administrators, and the bureaucrats are obviously getting scared. The VA head in Washington, Roudebush, sent VETPAC a letter claiming he is "investigating" the situation. This, and all the petty retaliation by the VA hacks, shows they are running scared due to the growing anger, strength and unity of the brothers in Brooklyn.

"The main issues right now are the 21-day detox, which the VA is using to threaten and punish vets, and discrimination by the hospital, which is cutting off more and more facilities as the struggle is growing. VETPAC has refused to negotiate until these demands are met."

*** NATIONAL OFFICE REPORTS ***

Up-Date on the Faction

All chapters should know (and take joy in the fact) that we expelled the so-called "Anti-Imperialist Caucus" or faction at the last NSCM. The details of this expulsion are contained in the minutes from the NSCM. The expulsion was a necessary and important step for VVAW/WSO to take and we are now rid of those forces who were trying to hold back the work of the organization and obstruct the implementation of the national program. Since the expulsion of this faction, we have received a report that at least in Oakland, the ex-chapter is continuing to work under the name of "VVAW/WSO." This ex-chapter is working at the VA and has even taken up the case of a Chicano vet who is being screwed around by the VA. These opportunists would have nothing to do with the struggles of vets prior to their expulsion and they refused to work around the program of the national organization. It now appears that in their efforts to "prove" they are the "real VVAW/WSO," they are going to pretend to be uniting with the righteous struggles the masses of vets are waging.

The National Office is trying to get more information on the current activities of the ex-VVAW/WSO chapters. If chapters hear anything about what the ex-faction is up to, let the National Office know immediately.

National Coordinator in Japan for A&H Bomb Conference

Bill Davis of the National Office left for Japan at the end of July to attend the 21st Conference Against A & H Bombs. VVAW/WSO received a scholarship to send a representative to this conference which was organized by Gensuikyo, an organization in Japan struggling against nuclear weapons. VVAW/WSO members have attended this conference in past years -- a conference including discussions of the use of nuclear weapons and bringing peace to the world. Also, ceremonies and mass demonstrations commemorating the deaths that occurred in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are held in these two cities. This conference is attended by delegates from around the world, including representatives from Vietnam, Korea, Africa, etc, and this trip provided VVAW/WSO to once again meet with representatives from other countries. Bill should be back in Chicago by the weekend of August 16th, and a report on his trip will be included in the next newsletter.

Wedding Announcement

The National Collective is happy to announce the wedding of two of our collective members, Marla Watson and Sam Schorr. The wedding will take place on August 24th in Kansas City. Sam and Marla should be back in Chicago sometime around the 1st of September.