

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR NEWSLETTER



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Enclosed with this newsletter is (finally) the latest issue of The Veteran; chapter orders are being sent out at the same time, so if you have not gotten yours yet, it should be there in a couple of days. There are several items in the paper which need special attention:

*Bicentennial Demonstration: We need ideas around this demonstration, both from chapters and from individual vets or vets' groups. While July 4th seems to be a long time away, the work to build the demo as widely and broadly as possible should begin now. As the NIC meeting discussed, to be successful, the demo must grow from our day-to-day work; it cannot be treated as a separate "event," which is not part of all the activities we are involved in. If your chapter works with other vets groups (campus vets clubs, for instance) you should start talking to them about helping to build for the demo. While VVAW is, through this issue of The Veteran, putting out the call for this demonstration, we do not see this demo working the same way that the July 4th, 1974 demo was planned or carried out; VVAW is not sponsoring the demo, making all the plans, etc, and then inviting other people or groups to come. We want joint planning, joint organizing, joint building--all toward a real joint demo on July 4th.

With other veterans' groups, chapters should be exploring ideas people have around specifically vets' actions which can take place on the days before July 4th. One suggestion, for instance, has been made--that we spend at least one night before the 4th at Valley Forge (which is about 20 miles from Philadelphia), perhaps followed by a march into the city. At this time, however, there are no final plans--that's why we need input from everyone concerned.

*Letters to The Veteran: We see the letters to the editor column as an increasingly important part of the paper; there is a good range of letters in this issue, covering many of the problems facing vets. The letters are in the paper primarily because chapters went out and asked people to write them (though one of them was wholly unsolicited). All of us who are doing our work are meeting vets daily, many of whom have experiences much like those described in the letters in this issue; talk to people about writing to the paper. Not only does this sort of information improve the paper but it is one more way to make people see the paper as their own. We may chop down some of the letters, and we may not be able to print all of them; if we disagree with something that is said in a letter, we will say so, but we're not going to mangle or distort what people say. We will also

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Chicago 7 Victory--Another Pig Surfaces: There was'nt room in the paper for the full story of the October 15th dropping of charges against the 7 people arrested and charged with various felonies in the anti-police repression demonstration in Chicago on January 25th. As the paper points out, the real reason for the dismissal of charges was the fact that a great deal of mass support had been built around the case, with demonstrations and rallies each time the defendants went to court, and even more important, a growing anti-police repression campaign in Chicago. Obviously, the powers-that-be in Chicago couldn't justify their dropping charges on that basis, so they came up with another one.

The person mentioned in the article, Robert Oxley, was in the demo as a VVAW/WSO member; during the October 15th hearing he was exposed as an undercover cop who had completed his police training at the time of the demonstration. One of the police witnesses to the demonstration had pointed to Oxley as someone who had been seen hitting a policeman with a board. As a result, the prosecutor was faced with 7 defendants, one of whom was both a participant (according to the testimony) and a police agent. So, after a long sob story about the poor injured policemen (and woman) who were not going to get their revenge, the prosecutor dropped charges. (This whole situation is complicated by political maneuvering between the Democratic city administration--Mayor Daley and cronies who control the police--and the prosecutor's office which is Republican; both sides are basically scared of undercover police being used against them.)

Undercover pig Oxley is still wandering around the country somewhere; he was not popular with his fellow policemen since they see him as the reason why the demonstrators got off. Since the time of the dismissal of charges, Oxley has gotten into a fight with another policeman and left the city; he is wanted by the police for that incident. Oxley is tall--about 6' 4"--with dark hair, about 22 years old, 190-200 pounds. Given his experience in Chicago where both the pigs and the people have no use for him whatever, it's not too likely he will reappear, but it is always possible. We are looking for a picture of him and will get it out to people once we find one that is useable.

Celebrate December 25th! If anyone needs a reason to celebrate on the 25th of December, it is the anniversary of Shays' Rebellion, usually pointed to as one of the first uprisings of vets in the history of the US. Daniel Shays, who had been a colonel in the Revolutionary Army, was the leader of a group of vets (mostly small farmers) who, in 1786, took up arms against the court system. The situation was that after the brief period of prosperity following the end of the Revolutionary War, a recession followed (sound familiar?); what that meant for thousands of small farmers was that their land was being awarded to their creditors, and the courts were the place where these awards were made.

Shays' Rebellion was only one of the uprisings at the time, but because Shays had some 1000 men following him, armed with muskets, swords and clubs, and since they shut down the courts of Massachusetts for several months, the new American ruling class panicked. State troops were finally called out (though, when called upon to fire on the ex-soldiers, they all fired into the ground) and the group dispersed.

The result of Shays' Rebellion, and the numerous similar uprisings among the poor against the court system of the time, was that the ruling class could no longer allow themselves the luxury of a confederation where each state could pretty much do as it liked. So, shortly after Shays' Rebellion was put down, there was a meeting in Philadelphia. The outcome of the meeting was the Constitution, providing for a

strong, central government which could, among other things, have a standing army to put down future rebellions.

Dues: We realize that chapters must get tired of us complaining--if it's not payment for The Veteran, it's something else. Well, here we go again--and we get tired of writing these notices, too. The old days, when coordinators got paid the magnificent sum of \$120 per month have stopped; so has the time when contributions to the organization allowed us to pay rent, utilities, etc. Two of the four people here are working full time; but at \$2.40 and \$2.50 per hour, that does not add up to a large sum. We're paying for food, for rent, for gas and electricity, and trying to keep cars running--all the same expenses you have. But we have added problems--like paper to run off newsletters, postage, and all the rest of the stuff that it takes to keep an office operating. Some time ago, the organization decided on \$1 per month to the national organization for each member; we haven't seen that from any chapter (except Chicago) for months. The dues are not just needed (which they are); it is part of the political obligation of belonging to a national organization which people want to see functioning as effectively as possible. Pay up!

The Veteran: We hope to print again in something like 6 weeks (as always, depending on money). The reason this paper is late, however, is not due to lack of money (chapters, at least most of them, did a good job of getting in contributions so that the paper could be printed this time). Simply, we haven't adjusted to only 4 people with 2 of them working full time; we hope to have one more person going to school full time by the first of February. This cuts down considerably on time available for putting out a paper as well as all the other tasks in the NO.

All of which means that we have to depend more and more on stories and articles coming out of the chapters. Both the Paul Allen case from Milwaukee and the description of the New York City Vets Day demonstration are reprinted more or less as they were written by the chapters. Material on various activities in Chicago also comes pretty much from a sum-up which the chapter did. The article from the Cincinnati GI Bill struggle is a combination of an article the chapter did for the local workers' paper and a letter describing the actions. We need the fullest possible information, written in a form which will make our jobs take less time. That means reports on actions, pictures (there are few pictures in this issue because we didn't get very many of them), and sum-ups.

If the chapter holds an action, get us a full report. Think about the need for photos and then do something about it--descriptive photos do a lot for the paper and for getting our message across. We would like to see an analysis of actions, the reasons why it worked or didn't work, but The Veteran can also use just the report of the action itself without analysis. So get them in.

VVAW National Program: If people have last-minute ideas concerning the program, they should get them in to us. As it now stands, we hope to get the program printed by the 1st of the year (that date could slide somewhat). We are planning to put a 25¢ price-tag on the program, with the understanding that chapters will use them as the situation dictates, giving them away if that seems advisable. While we have not yet determined the exact cost of getting the pamphlets printed, we anticipate that chapters will be asked to pay us 10¢ apiece for them. Chapters should be thinking about, and letting us know, how many copies you think you can use; that will give us a guide to how many we should get printed, and how many we can afford.

VA National Gripe Sessions: Through contacts in the regional VA Office, the Milwaukee chapter has learned about national VA gripe sessions, apparently planned by the VA to be held at regional headquarters around the country. These will involve bringing in one of the high-level bureaucrats from Washington to listen to the complaints at the regional level. At this point, we don't know much more than that; invitations will be involved somehow.

Needless to say, if we don't get "invited," that should not stop us from attending. We do not know how much these meetings will be publicized in advance (if at all); the one in Milwaukee is scheduled for late January, but we do not have any sense of when others will be. If chapters have contacts in the VA, they should try to find out as much as possible. If you get information which would help other chapters, let us know at the NO and we'll spread the word.

Student Vets: There are several articles in this issue of the paper concerning struggles which are building among vets on campuses. In part this reflects a growing understanding in the organization about the large numbers of vets on campus, and the need for us to build an all-rounded vets movement, one that speaks to the needs not just of vets at the VA or unemployment office, but to vets wherever they are.

Attempts by the VA and the system it's part of to cut back on GI payments for education have been notably unsuccessful in the past; as in the case of disability payments; when they cannot make their money-saving cuts wholesale, they will be trying to cut one vet here and one there in hopes that no unified opposition to their tactics will be possible. And, of course, they will manage to accomplish the same thing in terms of saving money through cutbacks. This tactic lies behind the sudden "investigations" of cheating on the GI Bill, of tightening the restrictions, of applying all the little petty restrictions and regulations built into the law. At the same time, as shown in the Cincinnati article in the paper, it increases resistance on the part of vets.

Further, the time is rapidly approaching when more and more vets are going to find the GI Bill running out for them; vets who were discharged in 1966 and 1967 are nearing the end of the Bill (which now has a ten-year limit). Several years ago when a large number of vets were reaching the end of the Bill, there was sufficient agitation to cause Congress to extend the Bill (from an 8 year limit to the present 10 years). The whole idea of limiting the time in which the GI Bill can be used is one of the clearest examples of the way in which the VA operates for its own convenience rather than to meet the needs of vets: if a vet has "earned" the right to go to school at government expense, why should that be restricted as to when he or she can use it? (We have, incidentally, received several communications from older vets who would like to use the GI Bill to go to school after retirement). With more vets seeing the Bill running out, pressure to expand the Bill should again be on the increase. And this, in addition to all the common complaints about late checks, no checks, red tape, etc.

Even though a chapter's work is directed primarily toward the VA, it would be a mistake not to investigate the possibilities of reaching vets on campus. There should be plans for leafletting on campus for the next chapter action, or informational leafletting about chapter meetings. Newspaper sales on campus have been successful in several places where they have been tried.

To provide a sense of the numbers of vets we're talking about, we're including statistics about vets on campus or in school. These figures come from a March '75 VA publication; we'll get out newer figures when we get them, but the numbers here give a good idea of the numbers of vets involved, and where they are.

Item No.	Regional office	In training			
		Total	College	Below college level	On-job training
1	Total	1,754,350	1,170,831	466,938	116,581
2	Alabama: Montgomery	38,830	24,278	11,933	2,619
3	Alaska: Juneau	2,427	1,223	1,030	174
4	Arizona: Phoenix	33,046	20,553	5,066	1,427
5	Arkansas: Little Rock	16,708	7,339	7,874	1,495
6	California: Los Angeles	141,265	118,990	10,040	8,235
7	San Diego	38,877	31,208	6,714	955
8	San Francisco	111,914	94,084	14,282	3,548
9	Colorado: Denver	31,112	21,590	8,025	1,497
10	Connecticut: Hartford	19,936	12,325	5,046	2,565
11	Delaware: Wilmington	5,449	3,829	1,347	273
12	District of Columbia: Washington	34,060	21,296	10,998	1,766
13	Florida: St. Petersburg	71,110	45,648	20,434	5,028
14	Georgia: Atlanta	42,231	19,761	18,702	3,768
15	Hawaii: Honolulu	10,085	6,394	2,796	895
16	Idaho: Boise	6,639	4,088	2,059	492
17	Illinois: Chicago	76,775	51,817	10,749	5,209
18	Indiana: Indianapolis	20,622	14,051	10,398	2,173
19	Iowa: Des Moines	17,292	7,953	8,235	1,104
20	Kansas: Wichita	15,474	9,938	4,517	1,019
21	Kentucky: Louisville	22,552	14,054	7,061	1,437
22	Louisiana: New Orleans	25,678	14,349	8,591	2,738
23	Maine: Togus	9,698	4,827	3,310	1,561
24	Maryland: Baltimore	20,106	14,046	4,865	1,195
25	Massachusetts: Boston	36,830	20,680	5,459	1,691
26	Michigan: Detroit	67,303	43,112	20,758	3,433
27	Minnesota: St. Paul	27,804	13,278	11,760	2,766
28	Mississippi: Jackson	14,038	7,166	5,143	1,729
29	Missouri: St. Louis	47,307	30,089	14,433	2,785
30	Montana: Fort Harrison	5,825	2,912	2,088	825
31	Nebraska: Lincoln	12,466	6,977	4,130	1,379
32	Nevada: Reno	6,940	5,063	1,516	361
33	New Hampshire: Manchester	6,155	3,988	1,503	664
34	New Jersey: Newark	36,531	24,029	9,842	2,660
35	New Mexico: Albuquerque	10,730	6,404	3,783	543
36	New York: Buffalo	27,969	17,283	7,143	3,543
37	New York: New York	65,194	48,366	12,244	4,584
38	North Carolina: Winston-Salem	54,756	33,049	15,573	6,434
39	North Dakota: Fargo	8,435	3,345	4,059	1,031
40	Ohio: Cleveland	57,737	34,394	18,335	5,008
41	Oklahoma: Muskogee	28,400	20,515	6,764	1,121
42	Oregon: Portland	21,616	15,857	3,201	2,558
43	Pennsylvania: Philadelphia	39,106	20,327	14,836	3,943
44	Pittsburgh	22,706	11,574	8,821	2,311
45	Philippine Islands: Manila	175	41	134	
46	Puerto Rico: San Juan	13,301	8,808	4,390	103
47	Rhode Island: Providence	14,696	11,806	2,116	774
48	South Carolina: Columbia	31,931	17,158	12,519	2,254
49	South Dakota: Sioux Falls	6,015	3,035	2,494	486
50	Tennessee: Nashville	35,772	22,146	10,978	2,648
51	Texas: Houston	46,909	34,605	9,930	2,374
52	Waco	62,719	48,369	12,361	1,989
53	Utah: Salt Lake City	12,906	9,708	2,530	668
54	Vermont: White River Junction	2,381	1,262	633	486
55	Virginia: Roanoke	30,347	17,300	10,115	2,932
56	Washington: Seattle	35,963	23,882	10,072	2,009
57	West Virginia: Huntington	10,400	5,728	3,114	1,558
58	Wisconsin: Milwaukee	32,336	18,333	11,254	2,749
59	Wyoming: Cheyenne	2,765	1,601	835	329

The vet student statistics give overall numbers for vets in school; a comparison with state population figures also points to some of the places where vets tend to settle in order to go to school (because of low tuition, good weather, whatever factors figure into this consideration). For instance, Florida (total population 7.7 million) has 71 thousand vets in school; Illinois has 76 thousand vets in school (but with a total population of 11.2 million). California (total population, 20.6 million) has 291.9 thousand in-school vets; New York (total population 18.2 million) has only 93.1 thousand vets in school.

Requests:

VA suit needs vets: A lawyer in Chicago had a vet/client; part of the case involved the fact that he needed treatment from the VA but, although he had an honorable discharge, the VA wouldn't treat him because he was out on bond. The lawyer has researched the case sufficiently to know that the VA's action is "legal" under their stupid regulations and is challenging that regulation on behalf of her client and vets in general.

Since the time the case began, the VA has treated her client. One of the lines of defense by the VA is that the case is "moot" since her client was treated. The lawyer needs to find other vets who were refused treatment by the VA because they were out on bail; the lawyer suggests that drug cases especially might fall into that category.

The case is being heard in Federal Court in Chicago on January 6th so time is pressing. If you know of vets in this category--refused treatment because of bail--let us know at the NO and we'll pass the word to the lawyer. After that, it's up to her--she realizes it may be necessary to fly people in for the trial/hearing.

We all know that we're not going to win the "War on the VA" through the courts; that doesn't mean that we refuse to use the courts when they can be useful (see the Farmworkers article in The Veteran). This is also a case where the VA seems to be over-reacting, bringing in their legal experts from Washington rather than relying on their local "talent." Keep the VA on the run!

CB Radios Needed : The Menominee Indians in Wisconsin are still involved in struggle, with heavy police repression--there are something like 150 police of various sorts (state, county, federal) in the area involved in harassment, surveillance, etc. To keep up with police activities, the Minominees, through Mike Sturdevant of the Indian Police Force of the Warrior Society, has asked us to try to find them radios. What they need is a 23-channel CB radio to use as a base station, and 10-12 mobile stations. People with this kind of equipment to give or loan should contact the Menominee Legal Defense/Offense Committee, P.O. Box 431, Keshena, WI 54136; phone (715) 799-3667.

Unloading old books: The NO has on hand 4 cases of Winning Hearts and Minds (the book of poetry by Vietnam veterans) and 11 cases of Free Fire Zone (short stories). Both books have some interesting reactions by individual vets to some aspects of the war; they also have some really bad political lines, and are not books we would put forward to represent VVAW. If people in chapters have contacts where these books could be unloaded in volume (preferable, all at once) and where we might pick up some bucks in the process, please let us know.