

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR NEWSLETTER



Number 45

Apr 29, 1976

THIS NEWSLETTER WAS SENT OUT ON APRIL 29. WE ASKED CHAPTERS TO SEND US SUM-UPS AND ARTICLES FOR THE VETERAN. WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANYTHING AT ALL FROM ANY CHAPTER! THIS IS AN INTOLERABLE SITUATION. WE DID NOT ASK FOR THIS STUFF BECAUSE WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE. WE ARE NOT A SINGLE CHAPTER. WE ARE A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, REGARDLESS OF WHATEVER NARROW THINKING IS BEHIND THE FAILURE OF EVERY CHAPTER TO RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST. LET'S CUT THE SHIT AND GET MOVING.

Memorial Day

Memorial Day grew out of the Civil War and is celebrated pretty much nationally (some southern states still have a Confederate Memorial Day instead). There will be an article in the next Vet giving the background, etc. From all we can tell, given the state of communications with chapters, there is going to be a rebirth of some of the old Memorial Day traditions this year. There will be parades, for instance, in cities where such things have not been held for some years. Memorial Day is one of the best excuses for the US ruling class to whip up a little war hysteria, to talk about the glory of dying for one's country--a concentrated version of what they will be (and are) putting out around the Bicentennial. It's also possible that they have decided that the American people have forgotten Vietnam and are "ready" to come back to patriotism and nationalism in a way that hasn't been possible for the past several years.

Some chapters are already planning actions on Memorial Day aimed at exposing the way in which the ruling class using that holiday for their own purposes. While that class is talking about how "these dead shall not have died in vain," we will be pointing out who killed them--and how the rich use working people to fight wars which are not in our class interests. The N. O. believes that every chapter should be trying to hold some kind of action on that day and seeing these actions as building actions for the July 1-4 demonstration. People should be investigating the plans in their local areas around Memorial Day and, just as we're aiming to strike the people who run this country at the climax of their Bicentennial celebration, we should be considering ways in which to do the same thing around Memorial Day.

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The idea of holding actions on Memorial Day was first put forward at the Vets workshop during the Cincinnati regional meeting for the July 4th Demonstration. Because of the nature of Memorial Day and the way in which it is focused on veterans of all wars (though probably there will be less emphasis on Vietnam vets), the N. O. believes that VVAW should start the ball rolling for actions on that date and should, wherever possible, suggest to the local July 4th Coalition members that they join in the action to build for the Bicentennial demonstration.

THE VETERAN - We have planned to publish the next issue of the Veteran (May-June) the first week of May. If this is to be done we will need your cooperation. As was stated in the recent National Office letter we are expecting chapters to send in articles for publication. For instance, New York City is preparing an article that will be here in a few days. They have also sent pictures of a recent demonstration. We expect that other chapters are doing the same. If not, please let this be a gentle reminder -- get the articles and photos in!

There are several other important factors in getting out the next issue. It is imperative that chapters who have not paid for the last issue do so immediately as we need that money to get the paper printed. If we do not receive the money then it will only delay its publication. So if you haven't paid (and we know who you are) please do so. If chapters that usually prepay their bills can send in money for the May-June issue it will help immensely.

One final point. In recent months we have run short of papers because chapters did not inform us about the number of papers they needed. We print just over what we need. If your chapter decides to order several hundred papers extra and doesn't let us know, we will run out. So, it is necessary that every chapter let us know before May 1, how many papers you will need. Remember, this will be the only issue before the July 1-4 demo.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - Subscriptions to the Veteran can be counted on 25 hands. This is pretty poor. Every member of the organization should actively be seeking subscriptions to the paper. Chapters should see it as a task to continually go out and get veterans and supporters to subscribe to our paper. This is important for two reasons. First, the paper is the best reflection we have of the organization, and in building a fighting veterans movement it is a major tool to get across our politics and practice. Second, the subscription rates help put the newspaper out. It should be pointed out, that if subscriptions are continually bought, from month to month from different people, a constant flow of money will be coming in to the National Office. So let's go out and win veterans to the idea of subscribing and supporting the organization's national newspaper!

In the latest issue of The Worker for Upstate New York there is an advertisement for subscriptions to The Veteran. We think it would be a good idea if chapters in areas where there are Worker papers asked them to print advertisements also. The Worker papers reach broad numbers of people and veterans who read the papers may wish to subscribe to The Veteran.

READ

THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

The VETERAN is the national newspaper of VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

VVAW is building a nationwide movement of veterans, against the same capitalist class that sent them to fight for them, and then put the squeeze on them when they returned.

For more information about VVAW in Upstate New York, contact:
Box 121/Ellicott Sta./Buffalo NY 14205
or
WAW/BOX 20184/Chicago IL 60620

SUBSCRIBE TO THE VETERAN!
\$6.00 a year.

From the
Upstate New York
Worker

(For the story that was run with the ad, see page 4 in this Newsletter.)

NATIONAL OFFICE LETTER - Even though you just recently received a letter from the national office, we thought it would be a good idea to mention it in this newsletter and to reiterate its contents. The letter basically dealt with the need for chapters to actively submit written sum-ups to the National Office on a regular basis. This is vital if we are to better our understanding of how we go out and build a fighting veteran's movement. If we share our experiences and our knowledge we can better grasp the struggle of veterans and we can better unite veterans to fight against the ruling class -- the class that oppresses the great masses of American people.

We asked every chapter in the organization to submit written sum-ups to the National Office by April 24th. These sum-ups were to be concise, written reports on the work of the chapter. With the National Interim Committee Meeting coming up in early June, these reports will be the basis for the National Office to prepare for the meeting. It is hoped that all chapters have mailed these reports to us. If not, we suggest that you do so ASAP.

We also asked for chapters to submit articles and photos for the May-June issue of the Veteran. To clarify one point. We did not ask every chapter, specifically, to send in articles, but we put out a general call to do so. If there is nothing to report then it would be senseless to write an article about nothing. The point is that articles do not have to be about big demonstrations or events, but could talk to the point that veterans are uniting in struggle. For instance, a short article on the petition campaign would be useful in building the overall struggle.

The final point of the letter was that every chapter has the responsibility to regularly keep the national office informed of its work and that these reports are not to be seen as one-shot deals. As part of this responsibility, articles should be submitted regularly for publication in the Veteran.

Buffalo, New York

The following is a reprint of an article in the Upstate New York Worker; it's included here for chapters which are interested in having other examples of vets struggles to include in leaflets, etc. We hope to have a fuller version of the article in the next issue of The Veteran.

"Buffalo--On March 24, 200 veterans picketed the offices of the Regional Director of the Veterans' Administration. Called by the Western New York Concerned Veterans Coalition, the demonstration was aimed at stopping government plans to cut off the GI Bill on May 31st for all veterans who were discharged before 1966. Also the vets were protesting a massive review of all vets receiving the GI Bill in Western New York which threatens to cut thousands off the rolls.

When a delegation went to see Hooker, the Director, he passed the buck to Congress, saying it was none of his business, because Congress makes the laws. He suggested that Buffalo is no place to live at this time and that vets should look for greener pastures. As a result of the action, the review was postponed until April 8th when a decision will be made on whether to do it.

Many of the veterans there, and representatives of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, a national organization fighting the attacks on veterans, wouldn't sit for this and wanted to do more. Copies of the Veteran, VVAW's newspaper were sold, and many signed the national Jobs or Income petition. The ruling class wants to forget about the veterans and all the promises they were fed to fight a war for the rich. Vets will not accept this and are continuing to fight until their demands are carried through. NO CUTOFFS IN THE GI BILL."

New Attack On Vets/GI Bill

So far as the people who run the country, and their stooges in the VA see it, they're going to manage to chop 3.7 million vets off the GI Bill at the end of May. But that's not enough for them--the economic crisis has several effects, both in making them try like hell to cut back on unprofitable services (and education) and making their requirements for educated people smaller. So they raise tuitions etc etc and try to throw vets off the GI Bill.

The latest gimmick we've run into is the national VA directive concerning grades ("satisfactory educational progress levels" in their terms). Vets who do not

attain these levels will be tossed off the Bill. Determining actual grades for these requirements will fall on the schools involved. In Chicago, each vet will have his grades monitored monthly and, if he falls below a "C" average for the month, he will be called in and councelled to take a program "more in keeping with his mental capabilities." Struggle is building around this latest nonsense. We suggest that chapters call vets affairs officers (or whatever they happen to be named) at schools where people are working or where there's potential for work to find out exactly how this directive will be coming down locally. And then get the word out to vets, because this is not a program which the VA is going to publicize--they would much rather do the whole trick as quietly as possible, picking off vets one by one. Propaganda around this issue should include the general attacks on education and should be tied in with RSB work in the area if there is any going on.

VVAW Work with RSB

The Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB), the student organization of the Revolutionary Communist Party, is currently laundhing nationwide struggles around cutbacks in education, specifically tuition hikes.

To date the Brigade has organized and contributed significantly to huge demonstrations and in some places school building takeovers in New Jersey, New York, Boston and Chicago, most around tuition hikes--more information will appear in the next issue of the Veteran.

When and where possible VVAW chapters should unite with and support these actions as they continue to build. In the past VVAW has had a warm working relationship with the RSB and these current struggles should be no exception. Given the number of vets who are students and many of whom have and will continue to come forward to join these fights around education, we have to see that it is the same struggle. VVAW chapters should be taking up the fight around the GI Bill on campuses as part of the overall fight against cutbacks in education. At the same time we should be continually mindful of building VVAW as a fighting veterans organization across the country and not a student veterans organization.

GI Bill Petition

A new version of the GI Bill--"Extend and Expand the GI BILL"--petition is enclosed with this newsletter. After considerable discussion in the N. O. we decided that the earlier version of the petition did not do a complete enough job of pointing at who the real enemy of vets, and of working people in general, really is, so the petition was rewritten to correct that error.

Recent Vet/Education Statistics (for use in leaflets, propaganda, or general information)

According to the latest report from the VA there are 1,803,350 vets in school as of October 1975 (which is the most recent figures the VA is giving out right now). Of these, 1,266,196 are in college, 448,635 are "below college level," and 88,519 are in "on-job training." For some of the individual states, the figures are: CA--287,672; FL: 76,096; HAWAII: 10,794; IL: 74,690; MD: 20,066; MA: 43,048; MI: 73,017; MO 45,296; NJ: 37,480; NY: 101,536; OH: 62,504; PA: 60,878; WI: 32,269.

Vets and Congress

As of May 31, 3.7 million vets will lose the GI Bill. These are vets who served between 1954 and 1966; they are now covered under the so-called "Cold War GI Bill" which was passed in 1966 giving vets 8 years from that time to complete their education; the bill was extended to ten years later on. Anyway you look at it, that's a big chunk of vets whose benefits are running out.

Somewhere around 20% of vets now in school are covered under this Bill (rather than the Vietnam-era GI Bill which covers those who were in the military after '66). With the economic crisis, the layoffs etc a number of vets who had no intention of using the Bill suddenly found that they had to go to school in order to survive. Many others, seeing that the benefits were running out, are trying to use the benefits while they still exist. And there is real anger about the expiration of the Bill. One response to this anger on the part of Congress has been the introduction of Bills in both the House and the Senate calling for an extension of the GI Bill eligibility from ten years to 15 years (balancing this is Ford's proposal to cut the eligibility back from ten years to 8 years). According to the legislative representative for the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, the Bill is "in hearings" as of the 28th of April. He says that there are only three potential "movers" around the Bill--the President (who is unalterably opposed and who, in fact wants to cut back), the House Veterans Affairs Committee (whose Chairman is opposed) and the Senate committee; the Senate Committee would like to do something about it, but they have no money. In short, he says that the Senate committee is the only friend the vets have, and much as they would like to help, they can't.

Cutting through all the garbage, what it means is that vets--and our allies-- will have to build struggle around fighting these cutbacks, remembering that we must rely on the actions of veterans and not on the Congress. If we don't do this it ain't going to get done!

Also in Congress at this time is a Bill which would extend the present 36 months entitlement on the GI Bill to 45 months; this Bill has passed the House, though not the Senate.

Both of these Bills represent concessions by the people who run this country, concessions that the vast majority of veterans need and support. The powerful vets lobby in Washington, made up of groups like the American Legion and VFW, has not been pushing these Bills the way they often push vets legislation. At least one traditional vets group, the Disabled American Veterans, has come out against the extension on the basis that money that did not go to student vets would instead go to vets with disabilities (their experience ought to teach them better than that, but apparently hasn't).

One group which has come out strongly in favor of these Bills is the National Association of Concerned Veterans (it used to be the National Association of Collegiate Veterans and provided a place where the honchos of college vets clubs from around the country could get together). NACV is staging some kind of action in Washington DC on the 10th of May in support of these Bills, though it is not clear at this time whether the focus will be entirely on lobbying or whether there will be more militant actions. VVAW chapters on the East Coast should be aware of the May 10th action, find out who is building for it in their areas, and unite with the progressive ideas in the demonstration.

VVAW should support passage of these Bills because they meet, at least partially, some very real needs of veterans. At the same time, VVAW has had experience with lobbying Congress: a large part of Dewey Canyon III was devoted to lobbying with individual Senators and Congresspeople attempting to explain to them what we had learned in Vietnam. Their class interests, however, were in keeping

that war going at that time and our lobbying did nothing. The lesson we learned was that we have to rely on ourselves and on the millions of the American people, not on Congress or the "system" and the rich who stand behind it. We should try to get this experience across to vets who are planning to be part of the NACV demonstration. However, if we do not win this struggle, if vets are still determined to go to DC to lobby Congress, VVAW should be part of the activity, lending critical support.

Membership Forms

Enclosed are copies of VVAW membership forms. At various times in the past, different chapters have had their own forms, in part because vets who want to join the organization have asked for an application form. The N. O. believes that chapters should get these forms filled out and send either the original or a copy to the N. O. This will avoid the kind of problems we are now having in a place such as Philadelphia; though there have been chapters there in the past, and a number of vets who have related to VVAW, we have no record of who they are. So, as a chapter is rebuilding there, useful information which could help in that process is lost.

What Every Veteran Should Know

Enclosed is an advertisement and order blank for the book "What Every Veteran Should Know." The book answers just about any question a vet could have concerning the VA rules and regulations, benefits, eligibility, etc etc (and also a lot of questions that no vet is ever likely to ask). The monthly supplements review all new information concerning veterans legislation. The \$11 will be well spent, and reading the book (or at least looking through specific sections like the GI Bill section) gives us the chance to know what we're talking about when dealing with the many specific questions that vets have. The book is accurate and complete--it's also non-political.

NIC Meeting

The meeting of the National Interim Committee is being set up for Philadelphia on the first weekend in June (that's June 5 and 6). By holding the meeting in Philly we will be giving the NIC members--who will be playing a vital leadership role in the demonstration--a chance to see march routes, rally sites, etc. But this meeting is more important than simply another step in preparing for the July demonstration.

This meeting will be used to sum-up VVAW's work, particularly around the campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill, and see where the future for that work lies. Even more important is to gain an understanding of how we build off the Demonstration. And, of course, we will be making final plans for the Demonstration itself. All of these things add up to both a full and a crucial meeting.

The N. O. suggests that people plan to send two representatives from each chapter to the meeting. We realize that people are busy--and will, by that time, be even busier. But the importance of this meeting overrides the importance of a couple of days of local work since the meeting will serve to give direction to that local work. Plan to be there. Suggestions for agenda should be discussed and gotten into the N. O. More detailed plans for the meeting will be coming out in future newsletters.

We Need:

1. Chants, slogans, songs, whatever that are being used to build for the July demonstration and to build around the GI Bill campaign. Send them in so we can provide them for other chapters.
2. Chapter leaflets.
3. As stated above, MONEY to print the paper.
4. Dues. There's not much we can say about dues that we haven't said before. As of the time this newsletter was written, dues for March or April have come in from New York City, Tampa and Boston. And that's all. The N. O. is consistently on the brink of financial disaster, yet there is the need to get new buttons, print up propaganda for the demonstration, buy supplies to be able to layout The Veteran, etc, etc. The dues are needed, and it's the responsibility of chapters to get them in to us.

Future Materials

As best we can tell right now, the VVAW national leaflet (it will be the size of a newspaper page, printed on both sides) will be printed and in the mail in the first week of May; we'll be sending bulk copies to chapters. Buttons are being ordered, so people should decide how many they need and start getting together the money for them. New GI Bill Petitions are included with this mailing. Other supplies for the July Demonstration--posters, stickers, buttons--should be gotten through the July 4th Coalition; if you cannot do that, let us know at the N. O. and we'll get them to you.

