

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR NEWSLETTER



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MEMORIAL DAY DEMONSTRATIONS

In the May-June issue of The Veteran there is an article on Memorial Day which calls for VVAW demonstrations. These demonstrations will have to demands: and Expand the GI Bill and We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War. This is the first time that the National Office has put forward that we should have demonstrations on a particular day and the purpose of this article is to give the reasons why we felt this was important.

Memorial Day is unique this year for several reasons. On that day the GI Bill of 1966 (which includes all veterans who got out of the service from 1954-66) will be terminated. This amounts to about 3.7 million veterans who will no longer be able to get money to go to school. This is an attack on those veterans and is an attack on all veterans. With the economic crisis, cutbacks in all areas are being felt by working people. This attack on vets is a prelude of things to come. Recently, the VA passed a new regulation stating that veterans in school will be subject to attendance checks, grade reviews with a satisfactory level of progress. Around the country veterans are fighting against these cuts. Examples such as Citrus State in Los Angeles, in Buffalo, in New York City, in Racine, and elsewhere attest to the fact that these cuts are real things that are affecting the masses of veterans. For VVAW to be building a fighting veterans movement, we have to be out there with veterans fighting against these attacks, or we will be left sitting on the curb sucking our thumbs.

We aren't just out there to leech off these struggles either. We are there because it is absolutely correct that we fight against these attacks while we expose the nature of these attacks in order to move the veterans' struggle forward and channel that righteous anger into correctly seeing that it is the ruling class and the capitalist system that is responsible. To ignore this situation with the cutbacks on Memorial Day is to ignore the real struggle that we are a part of.

At the same time that these cutbacks are being made, there is another question that will be hanging out all over on Memorial Day. This is the question of war and we must respond to that. For the ruling class, 1976 offers a chance to put out their line about how great this country is and how we must keep it intact for another 200

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years. In essence how they can suck off our sweat and blood for their interests. For veterans, as for the majority of working people in the United States, we have absolutely no interest in fighting or dieing for their system. On Memorial Day, which they view as a tribute to the fallen soldiers who have given their lives for the ruling class, we must be out there saying that we won't fight in their rich man's wars and that if we have to fight again it will be to fight them and their system.

By taking up these two demands, Extend and Expand the GI Bill and We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War we will be uniting with veterans across the country. If we don't take up both these questions we will be throwing reality out the window and sitting by while the mass struggle goes on. We must fight against the attacks on veterans and we must unite with veterans and others on the fact that we have no interest in fighting their rich man's wars.

VVAW is building for the bicentennial demonstration in a big way. This is the most important thing that we are doing right now. These demonstrations on Memorial Day have to be taken in that context. But at the same time, these demonstrations are not simply building actions for July 4th. They are demonstrations in their own right. If they are built for correctly by being right out front on the questions facing us, it will, in essence, build the struggle of veterans which in turn will build for the July 4th demo in Philadelphia.

Because VVAW is a member organization of the July 4th Coalitions in cities across the country, we have responsibilities to be out building for the Philly demo and this is absolutely correct. We are aware that there is an awfully lot of stuff that has to be done; postering, leafletting, holding rallies and forums and whatever else you are involved with locally. So in planning for the Memorial Day demonstrations we must take into account our capabilities, but at the same time, we cannot overlook the actions on Memorial Day saying their just isn't enough time. We also can't just prepare a leaflet, without going out and building for Memorial Day, and pop up somewhere on the 30th and surprise veterans with our demands.

We think that chapters should assess their strength, take into account the importance of July 4th and Memorial Day and actively build for both according to what we can do. Again, Memorial Day is not just a building action for the 4th. In building for Memorial Day, though, we cannot ignore in our leaflets or our demonstration, the Philly demo. Mention of July 4th should be in our leaflets and a VVAW speaker should talk about the importance of it on Memorial Day. (This could also be done by a speaker from the Coalition.) In areas where there are not July 4th Coalitions, building for both should be done in the same way.

As is stated in the Veteran article, Memorial Day ceremonies are being resurrected again after a period of time when they were downplayed. Tanks will be out in the street in New York City, and other "gala events" are being planned elsewhere. Each chapter should make phone calls to VFWs or ALs or City Halls to find out what's going on. If there are parades or cemetary memorials it would be a good idea if you leafletted or held some kind of rally nearby. We don't think that it would be correct to trash a graveyard memorial, but we do think that we can unite with people that attend these ceremonies. If there are particular events that are happening in your area you should use your imagination and be out there with the demands of veterans. If there are no plans in your area, you should still take the demands out to vets and have some kind of action.

In summary, chapters should do something on Memorial Day. We do not expect that every chapter will have a huge demonstration, but even if all you can realistically do is leaflet a parade that is being planned, you should go out to veterans with our demands and plans for leafletting. We cannot ignore the fact that we will probably be reaching more vets in the process of building our activities that we will during the course of whatever our actions are.

Of course, chapters should be taking pictures and reporting to the National Office on what you are doing.

This day, in this Bicentennial year, is unique. In building a fighting veterans movement and in building for the July 4th demonstrations, VVAW, in uniting with veterans on this day can make great strides forward. In taking out our two demands: Extend and Expand the GI Bill and We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War, we can not only build that veterans movement, but we can make great contributions to the overall movement to get the rich off our backs!

EXTEND AND EXPAND THE GI BILL

**WE WON'T FIGHT
ANOTHER RICH MAN'S WAR**

**BUILD THE FIGHTING
VETERANS MOVEMENT**



JULY 4th DEMONSTRATION - MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The July 4th Demonstration is rapidly approaching. All the chapters should be building for this in a big way. In many cities there are July 4th Coalitions and in some cities there are not. The Coalitions have a lot of literature available and these should be used. We understand that there are coalition leaflets, posters and buttons that have been sent around the country. The initial supply has been exhausted due to the fact that people have been going out and using the materials. More is on the way. If you do not have a coalition in your area, contact the National Office and we will get you materials.

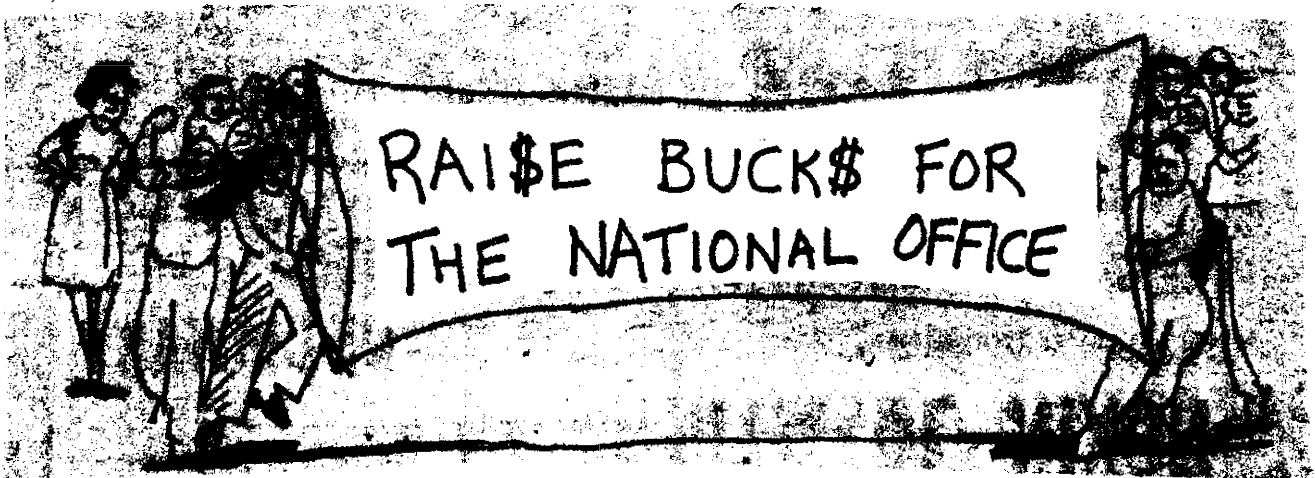
VVAW has printed a hand-out (that is enclosed in this mailing). We have sent a number of them to each chapter along with the May-June Veteran. If you need more you should contact us quickly, by phone. We think that chapters that are in cities where there is a UWOC should give some of the leaflets to them.

We are looking for a few good chants. If anyone has chants that can be used in Philly they should pass them along to us. Something along the lines of the old Jody tunes. One person suggested that we use a few airborne chants and not change any of the words, but we don't think this is too good. So if you have anything or if you can get something together please get it in to us ASAP.

FUND RAISING DRIVE -

The VVAW National Office is in a financial bind. Over the next several months things are going to be really tough, in terms of getting money in here to keep the ~~office going~~ office going. All of us are either not working now, or temporarily off the GI Bill. VVAW National office members are deeply involved in building for the Philly demo. Some of us will be in Philly working there and the others will stay and work in Chicago. We need the money to keep the office open. We are asking all chapters to hold fundraisers specifically for the National Office. As part of these fund raisers we think that chapters who have not paid for the paper or sent in dues, should do so in addition to raising money for the materials we will need nationally in VVAW.

Fund raising parties, raffles, book sales, cake sales, rummage sales -- anything that you can think of to raise money would be useful. Of course we don't want anybody knocking off a bank, but use your imaginations and help us out. We understand that many chapters are in binds themselves, particularly with the July 4th demo coming up, but the situation is critical and we need your support.



TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR NIC MEETING

The National Interim Committee Meeting of VVAW will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on Saturday and Sunday, June 5 and 6. As of yet, there is no firm plans on the actual site of the meeting. This information will be passed on to you when it is available. There will be two delegates from each chapter.

This NIC Meeting is very important for VVAW. There is much to be discussed and while it may cause some hardships for people to get there, we feel all chapters should be represented. The following is a tentative agenda for the meeting:

- A. July 4th Demonstration - We should discuss the role that VVAW will be playing at the demonstration and in building for it. We will lay out some of the details that have been planned for the demonstration. The NIC meeting will be held just one month prior to the demo and VVAW must get in final gear for it.

B. Extend and Expand the GI Bill Campaign - We should discuss the progress of the GI Bill campaign. Chapters should be prepared to sum-up their work so that discussions of the campaign can have the maximum input from all. How has the petition campaign gone? Is VVAW out there fighting with veterans against the cuts in the GI Bill? Are we advancing the overall veterans' movement?

C. Sum-Up of Memorial Day Actions - We should discuss the Memorial Day actions in the context of building the veterans' movement. This discussion should have a direct relation to the E&E campaign.

D. Congress and GI Bill Legislation and What Veterans' Think About It - There is a lot of movement by veterans around Congressional bills. We should discuss what the relationship between these spontaneous lobbying efforts are along with the work of VVAW. We should also discuss veteran's organizations that mislead the struggle of veterans, taking veterans down blind alleys.

E. Organizational Questions -

1. The Veteran - Does the paper advance the overall struggle of veterans? Is it being used correctly? How can it be improved? Why aren't people subscribing to it? Why do chapters have a hard time paying for it?

2. Dues have not been coming in from all chapters. This is very important for the organization and we should discuss the problems around it.

3. Nominations for National Coordinators - There will be three slots needed to be filled in the National Office. Discussion of this is essential.