

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR
NEWSLETTER



Number 47

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**BUILD BUILD BUILD
FOR PHILLY!**

There are about two weeks left until the beginning of the demonstration. There are millions of vets who haven't heard about it yet, and thousands more who have heard about it but haven't been persuaded why they should go to Philadelphia. We need to get out the word, broadly and boldly. So get out and push, pull, persuade, drag, coerce and otherwise bring vets to Philly! Not only because we want and need as many vets as possible at the demonstration, but because we know that involving people in the actual struggle will help to move them forward toward building the fighting vets movement.

By now it should be news to no one that 15 vets, on the evening of Tuesday, June 8th, took over the Statue of Liberty and held it until the following afternoon, a total of 18 hours. VVAW members from New York City, Northern New Jersey, Boston, Hartford, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee were all involved in the action. Despite negotiations and promises from the District Attorney that there would be no arrests if the vets came out from their barricades peacefully, a large contingent of park police, park rangers, New York City police, the Coast Guard, and the FBI finally worked their way through the 6th floor barricade and arrested the vets. They are charged with "criminal trespass" and "disobeying an injunction against the demonstration." At this point, hearings are scheduled for the 23rd of June and another on the 7th of July. All the vets were released on their own recognizance after about 3 hours in custody.

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The takeover was planned to build the VVAW national campaign to, Extend and Expand the GI Bill and to protest the cutoff of the Bill for 3.7 million vets on the 31st of May, and to build for the Bicentennial Demonstration in Philadelphia. The media picked up primarily on the GI Bill and, from what we've seen, the message concerning the need to extend and expand the Bill got across pretty well. As you can see from the enclosed attempts to reproduce newspaper photographs, the media caught the Extend and Expand the GI Bill banner but either could not or did not do anything with the other banner which says We've Carried the Rich for 200 Years, Let's Get Them Off Our Backs. A couple of news conferences in New York City following the action did, however, push the demonstration talking about the attempts in Philadelphia to suppress the demonstration and the Rich Off Our Backs--July 4th Coalition. (A copy of the press release put out by the Coalition is enclosed.)

USE THE STATUE OF LIBERTY TAKEOVER TO BUILD FOR THE DEMONSTRATION! Already, the takeover sparked a group of vets in New York City to seize an administration building on Thursday, the day after the VVAW members were arrested. Chapters around the country should be building on that event and pointing toward the Philadelphia Demonstration. Also on Thursday, Senator Humphrey (remember him?) introduced a Bill into the Senate to allow vets who were in school last semester and who were eliminated from the GI Bill on the 31st of May, to continue to get the Bill until they complete school or their entitlement runs out. We can't prove there was a direct connection between the takeover of the Statue of Liberty and the introduction of this Bill (which is only a half-measure, of course), but the timing is such that we can use it as an example of the difference between direct action and lobbying Congress. The Philly Demonstration will be another example of direct action as opposed to begging the people who rule this country for a few of the leftover crumbs from their tables.

Another point to use in building for the demonstration: as has been pretty well broadcast around the country, Mayor Frank Rizzo of Philadelphia has requested 15,000 federal troops in order to control the situation in Philly on the 4th. There's been a lot of scare talk about Chicago-'68 and the attempts of terrorists to destroy the Bicentennial. The FBI has been quoted as saying that they are keeping a special eye on the Rich Off Our Backs--July 4th Coalition. All of this, as the Coalition news release points out, is the result of fear on the part of the ruling class--they can't stand to see a well-organized, militant demonstration.

Around the request for troops, VVAW should be in the forefront, talking about what troops are used for and building on our experience as ex-GIs. Historically, GIs have tended to unite with vets--the Massachusetts militia at first fired into the ground when faced by Shays' Rebellion and his troop of revolutionary war vets; during the Bonus March, the first group of troops brought in refused to take the streets against the demonstrating veterans (finally, a special unit was brought in from an area far away from Washington where the troops could not have been "contaminated" by talking to the vets). If Rizzo's request is met and troops are brought into the city, VVAW will be demonstrating at the campsight, going out to find the GIs, talking with them, leafletting--we welcome the opportunity.

BUILD THE DEMONSTRATION ! ! ! ! !



On Memorial Day 40 members and supporters of the Milwaukee chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) went out to the Woods Hospital VA complex to commemorate their dead brothers and expose the government's attempt to use the blood of the dead to beat the drums for a new war.

The VA's "official" ceremony consisted of a replay of the Gettysburg address and a speech by Representative Kasten whose father owns the First Wisconsin Bank. The first words out of Kasten's mouth were "the Russians have violated the arms treaty, let's spend more money on arms to protect 'democracy' all over the world."

Then VVAW held its own ceremony and announced that this Memorial Day, the rich were honoring 3.7 million vets by cutting them off the G.I. Bill. It was honoring others by keeping them unemployed and honoring those still at work with back breaking speed up. VVAW presented a wreath and read a poem written by a disabled Detroit vet that powerfully brought out how vets and all working people hate this system that sends us off to die in Rich Men's Wars and their determination to build a movement to smash it once and for all. ■

Active VVAW chapters are all building for the demonstration, though there is still much to be done. Based on correspondence with the National Office, however, there is also building among vets in places where we do not now have chapters--in Chattanooga, Tennessee; in New Orleans; in Hampton, New Hampshire; in Latrobe, PA (not far from Pittsburgh); in Birmingham, Alabama; in Memphis--and we want to see chapters in each of these places, and more, as a result of the demonstration. We realize that there are a limited number of people doing the work in most places, but if it's possible to get out of the immediate area where a chapter is working, either to hand out leaflets or put up posters or sell The Veteran, people should take this up. In almost all of the cities mentioned above, it's been a case of one individual seeing the paper, getting in touch with the N. O. and then starting to recruit his friends. Vets are relating to the idea of the demonstration and it's our job to let them know that it's happening.

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Included with this newsletter are:

1. Copy of the Rich Off Our Backs--July 4th Coalition press statement following the Statue of Liberty takeover in New York City.

2. Copy of the Press Release from VVAW following the NIC meeting in Philadelphia.

*****Both of these statements can be used to help write leaflets or generally get out information around the plans for the Demonstration.

3. Given our lack of funds, the best we can do in the way of pictures from the Statue of Liberty takeover. The larger of the two pictures comes from the front page of the Chicago Tribune of June 11, 1976; the smaller from the New York Daily News.

4. Copies of VVAW national membership blanks.

5. Bills for buttons which people picked up in Philadelphia.

Please send us:

1. Newspaper articles about the Statue of Liberty or the Coalition efforts in Philadelphia.

2. Pictures, sum-ups, reports on actions going on to build for the Philly Demonstration.

1 , 2 , 3 , 4 --LOOK OUT VA, THIS IS WAR
4 , 3 , 2 , 1 --VETERANS FIGHT HAS JUST
BEGUN.

VETS ARE UNITING ALL OVER THE LAND
DECENT BENEFITS IS OUR DEMAND.

LOOK OUT VA, THIS IS A BUST.
DECENT BENEFITS ARE A MUST.

NO CUTS, NO WAY THE G.I. BILL
HAS GOT TO STAY.

WE WON'T FIGHT A RICH MAN'S WAR
IT'S OUR RIGHTS WE'RE FIGHTING FOR!

BRING THE DIRECTOR DOWN
WE WANT TO TALK TO THE CLOWN!

THEY SAY CUT-BACK,
VETS SAY FIGHT BACK!

VETERANS HIT THE STREETS
CAN'T YOU HEAR THE CALL
A VICTORY FOR ONE
IS A VICTORY FOR ALL!

WE AIN'T MARCHIN' ON MEMORIAL DAY
WE'RE TAKING OUR FIGHT TO THE VA!