



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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VETS OF ALL ERAS, CLOSE RANKS!

SUMMER 1980

WAR TALK, THEN ACTION

STOP THE DRAFT BEFORE IT STOPS YOU!

On the wings of patriotic and political nonsense, draft registration has flown back in the nation's laws. Congress, which in the current budget is grudgingly providing somewhere around \$6 million for research into Agent Orange and its effects on Vietnam vets, has no serious problem in approving more than twice that amount to begin the process to create some more vets. Despite all the pious professions by the President and by Congressmen about how "registration is not the draft," the bottom line is clear: registration has no purpose except to bring the draft closer. And the draft has no purpose but to send another generation marching into the U.S. war machine to get chewed up and then spit out onto the battlefield.

After postoffices all over the country have been clogged with 19 and 20 year olds filling out forms, then, according to the provisions of the new law, U.S. jails will be filled with the hundreds of thousands who refuse to register, who can't find the postoffice, or who just don't know that's what they're supposed to do. Some estimates say that the prison population could triple if the government invokes the 5 years in prison provision for not registering, though it is also clear that the government is going to have a hard time proving that any individual in fact "knew" that he should rush off to sign on the dotted line.

Registration and the rebirth of Selective Service Boards will



Anti-draft protesters burning a draft card.

be a mess. There will be a possible 5 years in jail for failure to register or even for not keeping the government informed when you move. Even the advocates of registration admit that at best registration will only speed up the draft by a week at most. And the "message" of "national determination" that Carter says he wants to send to the USSR is constantly overshadowed by the U.S. military's blundering.

Registration of American youth serves only one purpose: that's to bring back the draft. It has no other function no matter what pious words politicians use to bury the truth.

And, at the bottom line, the draft exists only to force people to fight and die for a system in

which they do not have a stake, or whose goals are not theirs; a draft is needed when people are not willing to fight because the war is one in which they don't believe.

In the late 1930's and early 1940's, as Hitler's troops trampled through Europe and the U.S. had not yet joined the war, Americans fled to Canada, not to escape the draft but to enlist in the Canadian forces which were already at war with Nazi Germany. It was a war that needed to be fought, and people were volunteering to fight it. It was a just war and people responded.

But for those of us who fought the war in Vietnam, we saw something different. There was no way we were fighting to "save

freedom and democracy" as we were often told, since we saw the lords of South Vietnam as the ruthless, puppet series of dictators, devoted only to saving their skins and amassing fortunes before they got the hell out. We weren't even fighting to "stop the spread of atheistic communism," something else we were often told.

Over a period of time, however, we did learn what we were fighting for: oil off the coast of Vietnam that U.S. oil companies had an eye on; tin in the Vietnamese hills; a large supply of cheap labor--as cheap as Korea or Hong Kong; a potential market for U.S. goods; and a last-ditch attempt by the U.S. government to stop the spread of victorious liberation struggles by peoples around the world. Corporations picked the targets; the U.S. government loaded the guns--and then sent us off to do all the dirty work!

There is no reason to go off again to die or get wounded for these same rich scum so that they can make a few more nickels--or billions of dollars, for that matter. We spend our lives already working for them, slaving away in their unsafe plants while they yell about our poor "productivity." We owe them nothing. And we sure as hell do not owe them our sons to fight another of their profit-making wars.

We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War

ARE VETS NEXT?

So there's going to be another draft--but you put in your time already and the hell with them: they aren't going to get you again! Well, think some more because the government has some plans for you, and these aren't plans to test and treat you for Agent Orange poisoning.

Carter has now asked for authority to call up 100,000 reservists (the law now gives him the power to call up 50,000) on his own declaration that they're

needed. This, of course, is in addition to the whole Army, Navy and Air Force who can back up the "Rapid Deployment Force" whenever the President decides it's needed. The added reservists are to be on tap because they're already trained and ready, says the White House, and would not require the period of training it would take for new troops.

Already, retired military personnel have gotten their preparatory orders about where to go in time of "emergency"--all the or-

ders need is the date to move out.

And while the discussions are being kept very quiet, you can bet that, with the need for trained troops in a hurry, there's a big plan for veterans sitting on some Pentagon desk marked "Top Secret," and highly confidential, and don't let Vietnam vets know about it for damn sure!

Plans for World War III are on another desk; this one, with

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VETS' NOTES **Cutting Thru Red Tape Making Sense of Regs**

SELF-HELP GUIDE TO AGENT ORANGE

The V.A.'s hard at it again, doing all it can to meet the needs of vets, just like its charter says it's supposed to do. According to Max Cleland, V.A. Administrator (and triple amputee Vietnam vet), Agent Orange victims should have a "good idea within two years whether their health is likely to deteriorate as a result (of their exposure)." That is, of course, if they aren't dead first.

Cleland is convinced that he too was exposed to Agent Orange. But he is also convinced that "studies just getting underway will establish what no one now can prove: that Agent Orange has no lingering effects to debilitate a veteran years after he encountered it."

As V.A. director, Cleland will, of course, be instrumental in the decision as to who gets the money for the Agent Orange study, planned to be completed by 1982, and for which bids are in and the contract is to be awarded in the near future. Of course, the study will be as independent as hell, and the fact that the director of the organization for the study has already decided what the conclusion should be will have no effect on the study. And after you believe that, just recall all the generals and admirals who went to Vietnam in order to be able to echo the statements from the government about the valiant troops of South Vietnam, and about how there was a light at the end of the tunnel! Even out in the field in Vietnam, we often came up with the body counts that our distant commanders decided we should have--whether we had them or not (and if we didn't, then the figures were added on later).

While it's certainly nice that Max has decided Agent Orange was harmless, his decision means nothing at all to vets suffering from the effects of Agent Orange poisoning. In fact, all of Max's decisions will do nothing at all to help one child whose deformities are the result of his father's exposure to Agent Orange.

In fact, putting the V.A. in charge of the projected study is like putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop. When the issue of Agent Orange first made

headlines, one V.A. official told VVAW that "The V.A. will only move (to test and treat Agent Orange) when it's forced to do so." His prediction has proved to be exactly on the mark. Angry vets taking to the streets and bringing up the issue of Agent Orange at every opportunity, the consistent glare of publicity, occasional politicians jumping on the bandwagon in response to wide-

high as \$4.2 billion) to be used by the V.A. for testing, treatment and compensation of victims of Agent Orange.

1. Find a lawyer; most VVAW Chapters are already in touch with local lawyers who are hooked up with the nationwide effort; in other places, VVAW can get you (or your lawyer) in touch with the nearest clearinghouse for the class-ac-

tion suit. The address is: COL Elbert W. Friday, Office of Environmental and Life Sciences, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC 20301.

4. Make copies of all the records--one copy for you to hold on to, and one copy for the lawyer. Once the suit against the chemical giants is won, the individuals within the class action suit can sue for damages based on their individual case records.

The class action suit is one means by which the Vietnam vet affected by Agent Orange can begin to get involved to win the testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims and their families. Vets who believe they are suffering from Agent Orange symptoms should also file a claim and get the medical exam being given at V.A. hospitals. The V.A. bureaucracy is as bad as ever; the medical exam isn't much good at this point, and even getting the paperwork done is an exercise in frustrating lines and delays. But it's still worth the effort. When claims are finally paid by the V.A. they will be paid from the time your claim was filed. The data from the medical exams may be useful to researchers. And the number of vets actually filing claims is looked at closely by Congress to see how much pressure really exists for pushing the V.A. to do something realistic.

To get the medical exam and file your claim:

1. As in the legal situation, get your records; the process is the same.

2. Get down the facts; the Veterans Education Project (1346 Connecticut Ave NW, Rm 904, Washington, DC 20036)--whose publication "The Veteran's Self-Help Guide on Agent Orange" is the basis of these step-by-step instructions--provides a questionnaire for the vet to fill out on his or her own. What's needed is, of course, when and where you were in Vietnam and with what unit or units; when and where you think you might have been exposed to Agent Orange; symptoms and other problems which may turn out to be related to Agent Orange. Those of us

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spread concern--all of these things have forced the V.A. to move from its original head-in-the-sand position, even though it hasn't moved anywhere near far enough. The pressure continues to grow, and the V.A. can only attempt to avoid its responsibilities by "studies" and "advisory committees" so long.

Where does all this leave the Vietnam vet who thinks he or she may have been exposed to Agent Orange and that he or she may have some of the symptoms of Agent Orange poisoning? In addition to joining with VVAW to keep the fight for testing, treatment and compensation growing, there are several steps the vet can and should take.

Join the class action suit.

A consortium of lawyers headed by Victor Yannacone of New York (he also was part of the law suit which led to the banning of DDT back in the 1960's) has filed a class-action suit against the five chemical companies which manufactured Agent Orange, demanding that they set up a trust fund (which could run as

high as \$4.2 billion) to be used by the V.A. for testing, treatment and compensation of victims of Agent Orange.

2. Get your military records. Fill out a standard 180 form (available at any V.A. office or hospital) to get your military records (your Army 201 file or the Service Record Book for Navy or Marine vets). Go to the V.A. Regional Office or write to get a copy of all records pertaining to your symptoms or experiences concerning Agent Orange. If you've been to the V.A. since getting out, your service medical records should be at the V.A. closest to where you live. If you've been treated for any of the symptoms of Agent Orange poisoning, get the medical records from the V.A. hospital where the treatment took place.

3. You can write for the relevant portion of the HERBS Tapes, the computerized listing in the Defense Department which cover up to 80% of the Agent Orange sprayings in Vietnam. Give your unit, dates in Vietnam, and

Memorial Day

A DAY TO REMEMBER; A DAY TO FIGHT!



Vietnam veteran and Agent Orange victim remembers friends during Milwaukee ceremony.

Confrontation with the "traditional" veterans groups marked Memorial Day for VVAW chapters in several cities. In Chicago, where the American Legion has been sponsoring Memorial Day ceremonies at the City's Eternal Flame since sometime before dinosaurs died, the Legion joined the dinosaurs in 1980 and left the ceremony up to VVAW, the Veterans Leadership Council and Veterans for Peace. As late as 11 o'clock the night before a Legion representative was telling the Chicago media that they would be there to join in a ceremony which would bring together a wide range of groups, but they clearly had no intention of appearing.

In Milwaukee, ceremonies at the Woods VA Center, where VVAW has either officially or unofficially joined in for years, were the topic of a letter from the State American Legion Commander to his various underlings. After complaining about previous Memorial Days being turned into propaganda displays for Agent Orange, he goes on to say, "Memorial Day is not a day to recognize a group of malcontents and

dissidents who are using a just cause to draw attention to themselves. For many years, this so-called veterans group has visited bonifide (sic) veterans ceremonies and disrupted them with bull horns and loudspeakers. Is that why we give in to them? Is that why we let an organization that is directly opposed to our beliefs manipulate us? They don't believe in our flag, our nation; are opposed to draft registration and will take up any radical cause to be noticed."

Legion opposition or no-shows didn't stop VVAW's participation. In Chicago, though the event was smaller than it would have been with Legion participation, it went on as scheduled, even though the City waffled on its co-sponsorship of the event and finally would not send a city representative or provide city services. In Milwaukee, VVAW was part of two ceremonies--a wreath-laying ceremony at the VA Hospital in the morning, where they were introduced by a World War I vet who drew the comparisons between gas in World War I and the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

In the afternoon, Milwaukee VVAW marched in the Memorial Day parade. Twenty-five VVAW members joined the contingent using the cadences rewritten from those we used to use in the military.

In the Twin Cities, VVAW made its by-now traditional appearance at the official ceremony at the National Cemetery. In Madison, Wisconsin, after the MAC-V National Convention backed off on its promise of a wreath for the ceremony (MACV was holding a national meeting in Madison over Memorial Day weekend), the local chapter used wildflowers as a tribute to those who died in battle. When nurses at the V.A. Hospital in Madison refused to help vets in wheelchairs outside where they could see the ceremony, VVAW went inside where a child, the probably victim of Agent Orange, passed out flowers while her father, a Vietnam vet with Agent Orange symptoms, sang.

Memorial Day, when the rich have traditionally trotted out their vets' organizations to trumpet their patriotic lies, didn't quite make it in 1980. Instead,

Vietnam vets had the chance to remember their friends who died or were wounded fighting a rich man's war, and to join in a vow to fight the effects of that war, and prevent such a war from taking place again.

AGENT ORANGE CIVIL SUIT

You're a Vietnam veteran, and you know you were exposed to Agent Orange. You have health problems. Your children are having problems. Someone is responsible--the chemical companies who made the stuff. You happen to read something in your local paper about a suit filed against these companies. Now, you want to be involved, too. How?

First of all, we want to say that we are not soliciting cases for any particular lawyers. We are fighting the chemical companies on every front, and the courts are one of many. However, there are 14 law firms nationwide that are involved in an organized way to take on these big businesses in court. The legal consortium has taken its leadership from Victor Yannacone, who originated the class action suit in New York. Your own attorney could take your case with no problem, as every complaint that's filed gets plugged into the already existing class action suit.

Documentation is very important. No matter which lawyer you decide on to handle your case, they will need as complete a record on your military and medical history as you can put together. This documentation is also needed for any claims for disability at the VA, as well as any doctors you may seek out for medical treatment.

Right now, the courts are in the process of deciding liability. Once the courts decide that the chemical companies are, in fact responsible, then each vet will sue on the merits of his own personal case.

If you are interested in joining the class action suit against the chemical companies, contact VVAW. We will help you get it together.

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30,000 in D.C. Say NO DRAFT, NO WAY

Chanting "Hell No, We Won't Go--We Won't Fight for Texaco," a crowd estimated at 30,000 marched from the White House to the Capitol Building on March 22.

Oklahoma VVAW Anti-Draft Rally

In early April, more than 200 people gathered on the campus of the University of Oklahoma in Norman for an anti-draft rally. The show of force against Carter's registration plan had special significance for VVAW as it marked one of the first appearances of the new Norman Chapter of the organization.

Ten members of the new chapter were at the rally to hear Mike Sutton, VVAW spokesman, say, in part:

"Within the next five years the administration intends to spend one trillion dollars on defense. Only with great concern and activism can we ensure that our national resources are not again wasted--that the lives of our young people are not again wasted.

"Can we make a difference? Yes. Will our activity have an effect? Yes. Consider for a moment, with the proper warm feeling, that Richard Nixon did not sleep soundly while anti-Vietnam war activists demonstrated outside the White House. Perhaps some powerful people are sleeping too soundly right now. Shall we wake them up?"

CONTINUED FROM P.1 Vets Next?

the RDF, the reserve call-up, and probably vets is looking toward another venture like Vietnam where "only" 550,000 or so will be needed. If the figure is familiar, that's because that's what was needed to lose in Vietnam!

Vets should not ignore the draft registration or the draft to come. While it doesn't hit vets directly, only a fool would believe that vets aren't right there on the list and that Uncle Sam and his corporate backers aren't quite ready, as a part of the many steps toward war, to bring vets right back in--having used vets once, and then thrown them away, to use them all over again. Maybe, if you're sick enough from Agent Orange poisoning, you might be "safe"; otherwise, start getting the dust off those old boots and practice some marching. Maybe you and your kids will get to go in together!

The Demonstration was organized by the Coalition Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) and brought together a wide array of organizations and individuals united in their opposition to President Carter's proposal for re-institution of registration and, eventually, the draft.

Speaker after speaker, from Bella Abzug to Stokely Carmichael denounced the registration plan. Many speakers talked about the war moves behind Carter's registration plan, and exposed Carter's policies in Iran and his reactions to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Carter used these event to bang war drums and suck in fodder for his war machine. Other speakers talked about the oil interests in the Middle-East and the ultimate plans to send in U.S. troops to protect the holdings of Exxon and the other oil companies.

The demonstrators, mainly young people who face the draft, cheered and clapped for the speakers. Their numbers and enthusiasm put to rest the myth that young people don't care about events in the world

After months of delay and postponements, the Revolutionary Communist Party's version of scab VVAW was pushed back into the slimy hole that they periodically creep out of, by order of Judge Warren Wolfson of the Cook County Court. His Order, which was agreed to by lawyers for both the real VVAW (the plaintiff) and the scab VVAW (the defendant) says that the scabs must call themselves AI-VVAW or Anti-Imperialist Vietnam Veterans Against the War, or various combinations thereof. Further, that they must print a disclaimer, "Not associated with Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc." in any printed documents they should put out, not use the VVAW symbol, not use the name THE VETERAN for their newspaper, and in general not interfere with events put on by VVAW.

The court case began back in June, when VVAW asked for an injunction against this group of weirdos passing themselves off as VVAW; we were concerned then, not because they were gaining publicity through work among vets, but because their silly antics were getting notoriety in the press and thus making more difficult the work of building the struggle of veterans. The first court appearance was in mid-November, but, through various legal strategies, the RCP's ver-



New York City VVAW joins in with the D.C. Anti-draft demo.

today. They also made it clear to Carter and Company that there is a widespread opposition to the draft and that resistance to a new draft is a wave of the future, not of the past.

The New York City Chapter of VVAW joined in the demonstration carrying a large banner reading, "Vets Say NO TO THE DRAFT, We Won't Be Fooled

Again." Reception to the banner and to the vets was overwhelming. People applauded, took pictures of the group, and came over to talk.

Also at the demonstration was a contingent of Black Veterans for Social Justice, who, together with VVAW, were introduced from the stage and received a big round of applause from the demonstrators.

Liars As Well As Scabs PHONY "VVAW" BEAT BACK

sion of VVAW (now AIVVAW) managed to get the case postponed as long as possible. The judge fortunately saw through their most recent tactic--having their original lawyer quit the case--and said he would go ahead with the hearing. There is nothing in his final order pertaining to VVAW; it consists wholly of things which the AIVVAW may and may not do without being in contempt of court.

Through their lawyers, the RCP-version of VVAW agreed to the judgement; in fact, they declared it a great victory and stated their deep desire not to be confused with or associated with the real VVAW which is not weird enough for their tastes. But their word turned out to be just a good as their politics: in a word, rotten. Since the court agreement, the Revolutionary Worker, mouthpiece of the RCP, has again started calling these turkeys VVAW. Knowing that without our name they are even less than nothing, since their efforts have been to stand on the sideline while VVAW did the

work that needed to be done, and they can't give it up, despite what they might agree to in court.

Going to court is not one of VVAW's favorite occupations--we've got much more important things to do. But keeping the name of the organization from being misused is important too. And in its headlong race to follow the dictates of Bob Avakian (Avakian is a kind of pudgy James Jones figure who occupies himself writing long letters to his daddy--a Superior Court judge--and mommy explaining how important he is, and then has the letters printed into pamphlets for his followers to peddle) the scab VVAW is trying to turn the name into an image of a couple of crazies grabbing headlines with being nuts.

VVAW went ahead to legally protest the name of the organization, the insignia, and the name of the newspaper because we believed this was one way to avoid confusion and hassles. We still think that fight is important--and we will carry it forward in whatever way is necessary.

Iran 'Rescue' Attempt

THE TURKEY HAS LANDED



U.S. helicopter after the "triumphal" raid into Iran--a victory just like Vietnam was a victory for the U.S. military.

The U.S. invasion of Iran to "save" the U.S. hostages was hailed as a courageous and brave act which met "unforeseen contingencies." In fact, it was a fiasco from top to bottom, ill-conceived and carried out in a way which both gravely endangered the hostages and turned international opinion away from any support for the U.S. government. And the U.S. media which, during the Indochina War, often asked difficult questions, gobbled up the whole affair like the turkey it was!

To begin with, the Carter Administration actually believed that the hardest part of the invasion would be the landing in the desert, not the freeing of the hostages at the Embassy. The military advisors who came up with this assessment could have only been trained by watching the U.S. Air Force fight King Kong on the Empire State Building. Carter and his cronies really believed that 90 commandoes were going to fight off the militant students inside the Embassy (students with guns

holding groups of hostages in separate rooms--not just one small group of students watching all the hostages), carry off 53 Americans who had been hit with a mysterious knock-out gas, hold off the Iranian Army and Air Force (without any air support, of course) and then safely fly away. And, after the whole affair was botched in its early hours (fortunately, for the hostages) these same military geniuses had the nerve to come before Congress and the American people and say that their plan had a "high probability of success."

The plan was absurd. Any Vietnam vet with combat experience can poke all kinds of holes in it. And it's clear that the Secretary of State also knew it and resigned because of "his experience with the generals during Vietnam who could make impossible plans look good on paper." While Carter and his generals like to hide behind the as-yet unrevealed "further plans" (probably two divisions of Marines in full combat gear, hiding

behind veils to look like Iranian women--and the two divisions might not have helped much, either), the fact is that their basic plan was nuts, and Vance has sense enough to quit because of it.

As the media described the tactical masterpiece, C-130's loaded with fuel, and 8 helicopters were to land on the old CIA airstrip in the Iranian desert. From there the commandoes were to take the helicopters into an area near Teheran where they would be met by Iranian sympathizers, taken the American Embassy, knock-out the guards and hostages, get picked up by the helicopters, and fly away. Meanwhile, sympathizers were to be causing diversions all around Teheran.

But in these descriptions, the media neglected a couple of useful questions. Why did the helicopters have to land in the desert to be refueled? They could have been resupplied in mid-air by the same C-130's, a situation that happened during rescue missions in Vietnam. Yet the need to refuel the choppers was the rationale for the landing on the deserted airstrip (deserted, of course, except for the busload of Iranians passing by).

Radio transmissions on the rescue flight failed to use even the most elementary scramblers. The transmissions were picked up by ham radio operators in Israel and Europe. Infantry units on the ground in Vietnam used more secure transmissions. The size of the scramblers is close to an 8-track recorder and about as easy to operate, yet the generals planning this affair apparently forgot that they existed!

And then there's the wallet of Stanley Thomas, Navy aviation mechanic, left behind in Iran. Thomas' reason for having the wallet there was that on these missions, "we weren't ever sure where we'd end up," a statement that puts the planning for the "rescue" into a clear perspective. But what are these highly trained commandoes doing with wallets on this kind of mission in the first place? What happened to the old basic inspection of troops, taught to every recruit, and used time and again in Vietnam? The fact is that the "rescue mission" was a catastrophe waiting to happen.

And then there's the great Vietnam hero, Colonel Beckwith who was the ground commander of the mission. He cried, he said, when he saw that his mission was going to fail--and that is his greatest claim to being a

hero, though the media unquestioningly devoured his every word. His "combat" experience in Vietnam apparently consisted of taking an armed convoy to a besieged Special Forces Camp; the action resulted in a wounded American and a dead Vietnamese (without weapon). His "combat" ranks somewhere below Tet of '69, Hamburger Hill, Khe Sanh, or Junction City! The media turned this loser into the modern Patton, just as the Carter administration hoped. But in case the memory is short, the "hero" left the dead (who may or may not have been dead when he cut out) left manuals and secret documents intact, and equipment--like helicopters--ready to be used. He was not under attack (unless you count the busload of civilians), yet could not even take the necessary minute to get the bodies and blow the equipment. In fact the Colonel panicked and took off!

The hostages were secondary to the politics of Carter's reelection. The media went right along with the story. The result was 8 Americans dead, the heat off the USSR for its invasion of Afghanistan, allied support for freeing the hostages greatly diminished, and worldwide suspicion of the U.S. military's ability to do anything more complex than blow its nose.

Mrs Timm, mother of one of the hostages, and a woman who refused to trumpet the Carter line on Iran, was right when she said that some people would rather see the hostages dead in some military action than alive through negotiations. The hostages might well be free today if the U.S. would issue a formal apology (as it did to get back the crew of the Pueblo from North Korea). U.S. crimes in Iran are no secret--the overthrow of the legitimate government back in 1953, the overt and covert support of the Shah for 25 years, CIA training of Iran's secret police. This admission, plus a promise not to interfere again in Iran's affairs, might well get the hostages out.

The role of the media, not only in the "rescue mission" but in their reporting of the entire Iranian revolution was condemned by the CBS anchor man in Chicago (who included himself in the criticism). After spending some time in Iran talking to the Iranian people, he attacked the media for their contribution to building war hysteria.

Until we begin to cut through the propaganda, we only move closer to another war like Vietnam.

HEROISM and RACISM BLACK PEOPLE & THE MILITARY

Did you know that, as of 1978, Blacks were about 30% of the U.S. Army but were 51% of the Army prison population? That 4% of the Army's lawyers are Black? That in the Army Reserve, which served as a great protection from Vietnam for its members, in 1972 there were 3% Black enlisted and 2.6% Black officers and five years later, the enlisted rate had jumped to 23.3% while Black officers still accounted for 3.9% of the total? Discharges--while there were approximately 30% Blacks in the Army, 57% of those getting dishonorable discharges were Black as were 40% of those getting bad-conduct discharges. Figures for Hispanic vets are much the same, though the record keeping was far less thorough.

To anyone who served in Vietnam, or during the Vietnam era, it was no secret that racism was rampant in the military, despite the recruiting ads about being an "equal opportunity employer." It didn't take a pile of statistics to see it either. It might have been the prisoners in the Presidio who refused to move for days; it might have been the Ft Hood 3 who refused to go to Vietnam; it might have been the KKK at Ft Pendleton. Or it more likely was any one of thousands of incidents where a predominantly white officer corps which was often from the South used their authority against the Black or Latin GI.

These constant "incidents" which went on throughout the Vietnam War and after were only the surface. The rivers of racism ran much deeper than that. Any Vietnam vet who served in combat can testify to the high percentages of minority vets in combat units, a result both of the racism of the military and of the American society which meant that a minority was less likely to have the background which would lead to assignment to a non-combat unit, and was, at the same time, much more likely to be a draftee. Few minority vets had the money to escape the draft; few had families with the influence to get them out; few had the experience or the connections to get away to Canada; as noted already, there were few Black reservists, and minorities were less likely to be able to hide away in college. And it sure isn't hard to picture the chances of a minority vet in front of his draft board in Mississippi trying to persuade them he was a conscientious objector. Finally, for minorities who were

not drafted, there was always the problem of high unemployment which made the military, with its lies about benefits and job training, a more inviting prospect for enlistment than the alternatives of starvation or knocking over liquor stores.

One of the ways in which racism has been sustained in the military has been through total neglect of the history of minorities in the military as if, by never mentioning the contributions made by minority GIs, that history would disappear. It won't, of course, even though it takes looking beyond some of the traditional histories to find it.

For instance, how many people know that the most decorated single unit in World War II was the 442nd Central Postal Directory which was all-Japanese, and which was fighting for the U.S. during a period when over 110,000 Japanese-Americans were shuttled off to the U.S. Concentration Camps on the West Coast?

But minority participation in U.S. wars goes way back before World War II. Crispus Attucks, Black sailor and fugitive slave, was one of the victims of the Boston massacre in 1770, causing some questions among some of the colonists who were fighting for their freedom from being "slaves" of the British. Black soldiers were a part of many early Revolutionary War battles until, under General Washington (a fourth-generation slave-owner fearful of slave revolts) Blacks were excluded from the military. The policy was rapidly reversed, however, when the British offered freedom to slaves who fought for them; finally, there were some 5,000 Black soldiers, most of whom were returned to their owners once the war was over.

The "Great Emancipator," Abraham Lincoln began the system of segregated military units. Forced by the lack of manpower to allow Blacks to join the military, Lincoln approved the recruiting of Black volunteers into the 54th and 55th Infantry regiments in July, 1862 (with white officers); Blacks were first drafted in 1964. By War Department directive, they were \$7 a month compared with \$13 for white soldiers. It wasn't until 1948 that President Truman ordered official desegregation of the military.

While Black troops helped to save Teddy Roosevelt and his "rough riders" during the invasion of Cuba during the Spanish-



American War, it was only after demanding "no officers, no fight" that the Black troops finally won a few Black officers in the field. (A few Black officers were used in the Indian Wars--the first Black graduated from West Point in 1877 after 4 years of the famous West Point silent treatment.) This war saw the first segregated Filipino units--part of the quartermaster corps to serve as waiters, cooks, and on clean-up and sanitation details. Because of the fear of yellow fever, ten "immune" companies were formed: Blacks, Chicanos, and Southern whites; they died of the disease just like the "non-immune" troops. In all of these units, white officers held every position above lieutenant.

370,000 Black troops fought to "save the world for democracy" in World War I; while there was a universal and "desegregated" draft, a higher percentage of Blacks were drafted than whites, then put in all Black units with white officers. Training of Black units often took place in the highly segregated South; in Houston, Texas, after pitched street battles with white townspeople, 13 Black soldiers were hung and 41 sentenced to life imprisonment after a one-day trial before an all-white tribunal. In the trenches, Black soldiers often found themselves m

much better treated as prisoners of war when captured by the Germans than as soldiers fighting for the U.S.

World War II found the U.S. government still hesitant to use Black troops to fight the war, though they were drafted in large numbers for cooking, cleaning latrines, loading and unloading cargo. But by 1943, manpower requirements forced the brass to use the Black units--still with white officers--in combat, and by 1945 with manpower becoming even more critical, there were integrated units. Despite the success of these units on the battlefield, they were disbanded immediately after the war.

Segregated units were a major sore point for Blacks, and the pressure to abolish them grew throughout World War II, where the irony of fighting Hitler in Europe while racism at home created hundreds of little Hitlers was intense. And pressure did not cease after the war. In 1948, President Truman finally signed an order officially ending segregation in the Armed Forces, a program for gradual desegregation which would open schools, and jobs, and eliminate quotas and, it was thought, would thereby eliminate segregated units over a period of time. But in fact, only when all-Black units were banned during the Korean War was there any real integration

of the military. Segregation came in many groups like the all-Puerto Rican units. Denied over racism among minorities, that matter, that matter, that matter.

In some ways, the Vietnam War provided a perfect example of the racism of the military. Much propaganda was simply racist. There were slants and problems when fighting alongside and a problem in Vietnam was as simple as propaganda made minority troops, a part of the racism about to buy racism being us to fight--"NO Vietcong 'Nigger'" pulled as it could.

In many of the wars, minorities were on the front lines. In the Vietnam War, a war in which fighting against the enemy was a stance, was even more so. The great majority of the war, whatever race they had no idea of the war, and racism in



of the military. Even this integration came about only after groups like the 65th Infantry, an all-Puerto Rican unit, mutilated over racism; desertion among minority GI's (and, for that matter, all GI's) was rampant.

In some ways, the Korean War provided a preview of Vietnam. Much of the U.S. propaganda effort in the war was simply racist--North Koreans were slants and dinks (a real problem when supposedly fighting alongside South Koreans, and a problem similar to "gooks" in Vietnam where it just was not as simple as the racist propaganda made it out to be.) Minority troops, acutely conscious of the racism at home, were not about to buy a whole lot of the racism being used to "inspire" them to fight--and the slogan "NO Vietcong ever called me Nigger!" put it about as clearly as it could be put.

In many of America's earlier wars, minorities could put aside the fight against racism at home in the interest of fighting the war in which they believed: fighting against Hitler, for instance, was a clearly just cause. But with wars like Korea and even more so, Vietnam, when the great majority of troops of whatever race could see that they had no interest in fighting the war, racism at home and racism in the military--no

matter how well disguised from public view--became an immediate struggle. That Black leaders such as Malcolm X and later Martin Luther King, took up the anti-war struggle gave impetus to the rebellions of minority GI's.

When George Washington faced the question of using slaves to fight, he saw the problem as one of giving guns and training to slaves who might not then be willing to be slaves again and who would, more importantly, have the ability to resist their "station in life." Washington was right, though it took much longer than he imagined. The racism of U.S. society has for years been pushed by those who fight it in their own interests to keep races fighting among themselves. Racism is far from dead in the military, but the role of Black and other minority GI's in Vietnam and since--both as GI's and as veterans--points a clear direction for the future.

BLACK VIETNAM VET FRAMED

Geronimo Pratt, a Vietnam veteran, has been in jail in California for eight years, convicted of murder and robbery. At the trial, he claimed he was in another part of California, 450 miles away from the scene of the crime. The State of California, with the help of the FBI put together a case that resulted in Geronimo's conviction. The evidence against him was both hearsay and political: because Geronimo had been a leader of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles, his past was used to portray him as an obvious criminal. He was first sent to Vacaville, a mind-conditioning institution noted for using drugs and operations to alter the thinking of prisoners. He is now being held in San Quentin.

Geronimo was--and is--innocent. And the FBI knew it. You see, the FBI had wiretapped the Panther meeting Geronimo was at (and you guessed it--it was 450 miles away from where the crime took place!) and did not release the taps to the court for "security" reasons. Despite the new information, Geronimo is still in jail awaiting a new court decision to follow all the legal hasselling. So much for "fair and impartial" trials, or for the FBI's "interest" in justice!

RADIATION, CANCER & VETERANS

While Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange join to fight for testing, treatment and compensation and for an end to

Atomic-test vets leader Kelly 49, dead



ORVILLE J. KELLY

Another veteran fighting to get the government to deal with the disability of which he died, is dead of cancer at the age of 49. Orville J. Kelly of Burlington, Iowa, was a sergeant at the Eniwetok proving grounds in the Pacific in 1957 and '58, during which time he witnessed 22 atomic tests. He later organized the National Association of Atomic Veterans which is fighting to get exposure to nuclear tests recognized as a cause of disability by the V.A.

Like exposure to Agent Orange, the exposure to the atomic tests has had an often fatal effect on veterans long after they were out of the service, and the V.A., squeezing every nickel, refused to grant that the disability involved was "service connected." Kelly fought on and finally, in November of 1979, won pension rights for himself and his family.

VVAW expresses its respect and admiration for those who, like Mr. Kelly, fought for the cause of veterans dying of exposure to deadly U.S. weapons. We intend to carry on the fight to get treatment and compensation for those veterans and their families.

the use of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T; another group of victims of the U.S. government and the profit-grasping corporations is carrying on a similar battle. These are the victims of radiation. They include some 250,000 American troops (now mostly vets) who were deliberately exposed to radiation during atmospheric nuclear tests, military personnel who went into Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the U.S. bombings, workers in a number of plants where nuclear radiation is present, people living near Three Mile Island or other nuclear plants, uranium miners (primarily Native Americans) and people living around government test sites.

In mid-April, the Citizens' Hearings for Radiation Victims brought together representatives of all these groups plus experts in the field, and, in their final report, called for an end to experimentation on humans, and reductions in public and occupational exposure to ionizing radiation. Further, the conclusions of the hearings urged compensation for exposed vets, workers, and others, and new and independent scientific research, along with unrestricted access to medical records.

In addition to the 250,000 vets exposed to radiation during atomic tests from 1946 to 1962 (sometimes, as close as 1000 yards from ground zero!) many vets were sent into Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the U.S. bombings with an absolute minimum of protection and less information about the potential dangers of radiation exposure. Moreover, the Defense Department and Atomic Energy Commission (now the Department of Energy) conducted human experiments to "improve" nuclear technology, examining behavior patterns without paying any attention to possible physical effects. And while, as far as is known, the government is not now conducting this kind of experiment, all the mechanisms are still in place.

The incidence of cancer and other diseases among these vets is far above a non-exposed group of the same age. Yet, as in the case of Agent Orange, the V.A. is moving at the speed of a crippled turtle, apparently in hopes that vets will all die off and leave the V.A. to shuffle its papers in peace!

For more information, contact: Citizens Hearings for Radiation Victims, 317 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Washington, DC 20003; phone: (202) 543-0222.



Who Are We, Where We Came From, Who Can Join



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR



Fifteen VVAW members seize the Statue of Liberty in December, 1971, to protest the bombing of Haiphong Harbor; in June, 1976, we did it again to protest GI Bill cutoffs.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War is a national veterans organization which began in 1967 and which mobilized tens of thousands of veterans to fight for an end to the Indochina War. Our members are veterans not only of Vietnam, but vets from all wars and all eras.

"Used once and thrown away" summarizes how VVAW sees the situation of veterans. We were used once to fight a war for the profits of the rich. And despite all kinds of promises, we were thrown away once

we got out of the service--thrown away with high unemployment, an inadequate GI Bill, a VA hospital system that is next to worthless.

Both through our own experience, and the history of the struggle of veterans in the U.S. going back to the end of the Revolutionary War, we know that none of these abuses of vets are going to change if we just lay back and wait--that's why VVAW takes to the streets or does whatever is necessary to fight to improve the conditions of vets.

Having been in Indochina, many of us began to learn that we had more in common with the supposed "enemy" than with the rich class of people who sent us there. Because of what we experienced there and because we see the danger of a new rich man's war, we take every opportunity to bring to the American people our slogan, "Fight the Rich, Not Their Wars."

Our experience has also shown us that vets, as individuals, can do little to improve our situation, but that a group of vets, united to struggle as one, makes a difference. VVAW emphasizes the need for organization and works to build a fighting veterans' movement. We aren't talking about being another American Legion which has a large membership, but has a leadership which pushes a boatload of backward ideas.

We bring together organization and action in our national program, in the fight for Jobs or Income Now, for Decent Benefits

for All Vets--regardless of discharge; we take on specific campaigns such as Extend and Expand the GI Bill, particularly the 10-year limitation on the use of the Bill; and Decent Healthcare for all Vets--testing and treatment and compensation for victims of Agent Orange, for instance.

VVAW is a democratic organization; organizational decisions are made, as much as possible, after local chapters have discussed them and provided their input. Regional and national meetings are held to bring together VVAW members from across the country to make plans and decisions for the national organization. Day-to-day coordination is provided by an elected National Office which also puts out THE VETERAN, our national newspaper.

You are invited to join VVAW and we welcome all who want to build a real veterans' movement which will fight for the needs of vets! ■

In Minnesota, VVAW, along with the Vietnam Veterans Civic Council, initiated an outreach program to identify potential Agent Orange exposure victims. The program has resulted in over 9,000 veterans requesting a screening by the VA Medical Center.

VVAW and VVCC decided to undertake this massive outreach program because the VAMC was refusing to do any kind of sur-

9000 SEEK AGENT ORANGE TESTING MINNESOTA OUTREACH

vey of Vietnam veterans and their exposure to Agent Orange. The VA contended that only 70 veterans had presented themselves for screening. Thus, said the VA, there is no problem

There are 51,325 Vietnam era vets in Minnesota. The task was huge, but the veterans refused to give up. They knew that the only reason that vets were not going into the VA was because they had no information. Veterans had not been informed that the herbicides used in Vietnam could cause health problems. So, that became the purpose of the outreach--to inform vets of the potential health problems that existed as a result of their exposure, and to encourage them to demand a screening at the VA.

Many people and organizations helped in the effort. They started with the State Dep't. of Vets Affairs, and found cooperation. They were able to use the computer list of Minnesota vets who had applied for the Vietnam Veterans Bonus Program. The grass roots contacting of vets was done by County Veterans Service Officers, and service officers from American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Veterans Resource Center. Computer time was donated by a local firm to the tune of \$32,000!

As a result, the outreach program reached over 25,000 vets. Out of that, over 9,000 have demanded a screening by the VA.

Needless to say, the VAMC in Minnesota has fallen way behind in their "screening" program. Even if they were keeping up, the screening is nothing more than a sloppy physical, and a

four page form that the vets have to fill out. None of the results of the screening are available to the vets themselves, or to the vets organizations who worked on the program. But, it forced the VA to admit that there is a problem--even though they still won't admit that the problems are from Agent Orange.

Funds Needed AGENT ORANGE FILM

The Minneapolis/St. Paul VVAW chapter, in coalition with the Vietnam Veterans Civic Council, Minnesota Association of Concerned Veterans, and the University of Minnesota Veterans Association, are continuing their outreach efforts by producing a documentary film. Film in the Cities (FITC), a twin cities based media resource center, has agreed to co-operate in the production by donating \$6,000 in equipment and supplies and the help of two film classes for research and production.

The film will focus on the life of a family plagued with Agent Orange problems - i.e. the insensitivity of the VA, the fear of not knowing what you have and the realization that there is no treatment for the poisoning. The politics of the issue will be covered

by documenting the experiences of the veteran and his family.

When the film is completed in August of this year, it will be available to veterans organizations across the country, to TV and cable networks, and to all schools. We will promote the widest possible distribution.

Right now, the coalition needs about \$5,000 to purchase the film stock. They need help. You can make a tax deductible contribution to: Film in the Cities Agent Orange Film Project 2298 University Ave. St. Paul, MN 55108 Further, we need case histories and still photos of veterans with a variety of Agent Orange symptoms. Send any inquiries or information to Jim Gambone in care of Film in the Cities.

SPECIAL!

WHAT IS AGENT ORANGE...page 16

THE VETERAN
Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Veterans' Investigation into Effects & Problems
VETS SAY 'TREAT AGENT ORANGE', TARGET VA

The Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is a national organization of veterans who fought in the Vietnam War. It was founded in 1967 and has since then been active in protesting the war and the treatment of veterans. The VVAW has been successful in many of its efforts, including the seizure of the Statue of Liberty in 1971 and 1976. The VVAW is currently working on a campaign to force the VA to provide medical screening for Agent Orange exposure victims.

16 pages of testimony by victims of Agent Orange and experts on the effects of the chemical on Vietnam Vets and their families. 50¢ post paid.

Make checks payable to
Vietnam Veterans Against the War
Box 20184, Chicago, ILL 60620

Unemployment, Inflation Up; Help for Vets Way Down

VA BUDGET vs VETS' NEEDS

No matter how you look at it the Carter economy is in a mess. Whether you're hit by inflation or recession or, like most people, by both at the same time, it's clear that the situation is bad now and has every possibility of turning into a full-scale disaster at any moment.

To be fair, the inflation is not all Carter's fault—he suffers from the economic problems too; so serious are the problems that Jimmy and Rosalyn slipped out of the "worth over a million dollar" class, a problem that a large majority of the American people would certainly like to share. While we may all be in the same boat, a very few are "suffering" in the first class cabins, while all the rest of us are stuck away so far under deck you'd never know it was the same boat. And we sure don't have much input into how the boat should be steered!

While the galloping inflation is not solely the fault of the President, he certainly has done nothing to stop it, outside of occasional sermons. However, the rapidly approaching depression (one which is already here for millions of American ex-workers) is more directly the result of the Carter policies. But for either problem—recession or inflation—or for the combination of the two, the solution offered is always the same: push the burden of the problem on to those who can least afford to bear it. Cut off welfare. Cut food stamps. Slice pensions. Tax social security payments. Slash away at unemployment benefits. And, of course, cut the budget for the Veterans Administration, which is sorry enough already and which will only get worse.

Prospective V.A. budget figures for the next fiscal year (starting on the 1st of July), as put out by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee total \$21,585,335,000. That's a lot of bucks, and a lot of our taxes go into those bucks since, as we all know, it isn't the President or Congress who finance all the things they decide we need.

Among the proposals made either by the President or the Senate Committee in this V.A. budget are: disability "cost of living" increases of 13% (compared with an inflation rate of at least 18%); end of correspondence courses under the GI Bill and an end to flight training; a proposed increase in GI Bill benefits (10% in Carter's proposal, 15% in the Senate version, but



in either case not much of an increase since the last raise was in 1977); postponement of new hospital construction (to save \$236 million), while putting out another \$6 million for Vietnam-era veteran outreach centers; \$5 million to study the effects of Agent Orange with the money spread over a three-year period of the V.A. study; and elimination or cutbacks in a number of other, smaller programs such as the present system of dental care for service-connected dental problems (to save \$32 million) or the direct loan program for GI housing (to save another \$59 million).

\$5 million for Agent Orange research! \$6 million for Vietnam era vets outreach centers! These are two of the V.A. programs which have the greatest potential for providing some real aid to Vietnam vets. \$5 million is a lot of money, but hardly when set against a budget of \$21 1/2 billion! Nor is it all that much when you see that the American Battle Monuments Commission is down for a shade over \$9 million.

And all of these figures were out before Carter's latest budget-chopping fit; as his whole program to "balance" the budget

sloshes around between the House, the Senate and the White House, we can count on more programs being slashed.

And vets are a long ways from being the only group hit by the cuts. Look at welfare, or food stamps, or aid to dependent mothers, or unemployment compensation, or federal school funds, or a huge list of programs which are needed by people for whom this system can provide no useful work. Right down the line, these are targeted for cutbacks. And while these programs are cut, Congress has no problem at all in approving money for the registration of 19 and 20 year olds; 2 times as much \$ for draft registration as for research on Agent Orange!

And Congress has minor problems coming up with incredible amounts of money for the Defense Department, no doubt so they can concoct whatever will be the Agent Orange of the next war they're plotting.

As the economy heads into its tailspin, Vietnam-era vets will be hit harder and harder. Many of us, because we spent our time in the military, don't have the seniority to protect us against layoffs, like the 10% cutback recently announced by

General Motors. The system that sent us off to war and used us in every way it could to protect and expand its profits, is now getting ready to throw us into the trashheap once again.

What's the solution? A freeze on wages, rents, prices, profits, etc would be a start, though no real solution. It would sure beat the present program where Carter can try out his 9% guideline for wages while inflation speeds along at 18%; that's simply a wage freeze without freezing anything else (except the people who can't afford their heating bills). We need no more of a situation where wages creep up (if you aren't laid off), while prices and profits gallop ahead; we can only keep falling further and further behind until the "American Dream," where we can afford to do more for our children than our parents could afford to do for us, becomes a nightmare.

A longer-term solution is more difficult. One example, however, suggests some possibilities: in the first quarter of 1980, profits of Exxon were up 102%; Shell, up 66.5%; Occidental Petroleum, up 236.4%; Standard Oil of Ohio, up 169%. Yet almost everyone agrees that our dependence on oil and oil by-products must cease. But at the same time, if the producers of power had found a way to charge the consumer for solar power or for wind power, we would long ago have stopped being so dependent on oil. In short, we live under a system where profit is king and the rest of us are not much better than serfs.

Veterans have a long history of dealing with problems like those of today. During the Depression, in 1932, veterans marched on Washington, 25,000 strong, in what became known as the Bonus March. And while the government of Herbert Hoover finally brought out the troops to chase the vets out of the Capitol, veterans won most of what they went to Washington to get. Veterans marched against the Indochina War, and vets have united—and hit the streets—time and time again around issues that affected us and others. Vets can be counted on to fight the "solution" to the economy that will come from our politicians—that we need a war to stimulate the economy: we're not about to sacrifice our children to the profits of a few huge corporations. We've seen enough of that already!

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FRAGGIN'

Sp 5 Willy(Ret.)



"Kill a Commie for Christ!" That idea wasn't too widespread during the Vietnam War, but it did have an effect on many of us. We were told that one of the reasons for our being in Vietnam was that Communism was atheistic, and we, like Christian soldiers everywhere, were off to do battle for God.

Looking back it seems funny. Funny--not humorous. It was a joke, a sick and cruel joke. Young men were deceived into going off to kill and be killed in the name of religion. You wouldn't think things like this could happen in 1980.

But wait! Right-wing religious nuts held a rally in Washington on the 29th of April. The idea was to hold a day of humiliation and prayer so that Americans who are not "right" enough would repent.

One of the organizers, Dr. James Kennedy, explained some of the sins. He said that peace-minded Americans have permitted the nation to grow weak. According to Kennedy, the Russians would kill 80% of us in a nuclear first-strike, while we could only kill 50% of them. We must repent before God so we can become powerful enough to kill more of them!

"Repent, for the time is at hand!" "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord!" Take up the gun and kill a (chose one: Commie, Moslem, adulteress, drunkard, Greek, Nigerian, Japanese, all of the above) for Christ! And all of you young men who are lucky enough to make it home--you can stop at Dr Kennedy's comfortable Florida home and receive absolution.

* * * *

I see where the armed forces are getting rid of C-rations. The troops are really going to miss those tasty delicacies--no more ham and lima beans. Some will still be able to enjoy them for three more years which is what they figure it will take to eat up the current stock. The C-rats will be replaced by freeze-dried beef with strawberries and pineapple-nut cake. My mouth is watering just thinking about what we'll get to eat when they call us back in.

* * * * *

Speaking of mouth-watering delicacies, there are five restaurants in Washington that serve the best, and it's cheap, too. Sirloin steak for \$2.65. Baked filet of flounder for \$1.60. Eggs Benedict for \$2.00.

The only problem is that these restaurants are restricted. They are inside the Pentagon, and you have to be top brass (making \$45,000 a year and up) to get in. It's sort of like the Food Stamp program: taxpayer money goes to these hard-up individuals so they won't starve.

* * * * *

While the brass is living high, they certainly aren't forgetting some of the troops. The U.S. Navy, which has banned alcoholic beverages aboard ship since 1914, is going to allow the sailors on the USS Nimitz to have beer aboard ship as they float around the Persian Gulf providing a base for helicopters to go off to crash in the Iranian desert. Seaman will be allowed two (2) cans of beer every weekend! There should be some hell-raising parties now. Let's hope they all sober up before they launch their invasion of Iran!

Dr Kennedy is right when he points to the decay of the military. Not only is there beer aboard ship, but the Navy brass is in a frazzle over what to do with Machinist Mate Lisa Ann Wolff. She was caught out of uniform--all the way out--in the middle of Playboy.

Unfortunately for the Navy, she was off duty so they can't figure out what to charge her with. They think there's something wrong when a machinist's mate from the destroyer Sam Gompers bares her top secrets to an audience of millions of readers and gawkers, but they can't find the right regulation.

I think they ought to leave her alone. If the Nimitz can have beer, the Sam Gompers should be allowed a playmate. More than that, however, does anyone think that if Machinist's Mate John Wolff had posed for Playgirl, anyone would have said anything?

CONTINUED

VETERANS' NOTES

who stomped around the jungles know we have no way of coming up with the particular date when we saw planes spraying Agent Orange; mostly we didn't even know where we were--certainly not exactly. It was anywhere from 15 to 9 years ago and every day looked like every other day--dates meant little except to figure how many more days in the Nam. So come as close as you can. If you haven't kept contact with people from your unit, it's worth the effort to try to re-new contact: the more memories the better, and it may be important in the future to have supporting testimony around exposure.

3. File the claim; it can be done at any V.A. office, and there should be counselors there to help with the paperwork.

4. Get a free medical exam. This can be done at any V.A. medical center; a V.A. circular (DM&S Cir 10-79-83) requires you be given a full exam; get a copy of the results and of your medical records. This exam is mandatory no matter what kind of discharge you may have.

Neither of these approaches will win vets the testing, treatment and compensation that we badly need. They are only early steps in the process. Keeping the pressure on, keeping the issue in front both of vets and of the American people builds the kind of pressure which forces the V.A. to begin to do its job--in fact the few short steps the V.A. has taken this far are the result of doing what they were forced to do.

VVAW Chapters are working with all aspects of Agent Orange; most chapters are in contact with local lawyers working on the class-action suit--or we can get the addresses. We can help with some of the V.A. paperwork or at least give some suggestions; in some places we're working with doctors who are way ahead of the V.A. in terms of testing and treatment. Give us a call.

and join the struggle!

From Inside the VA

The following comes from a transcript of a V.A. Conference Call from the central office to the regional offices; the speaker is Dr Richard Levinson from V.A.'s Professional Services. The call was made on March 14, 1980, almost two years from the time that the Agent Orange story hit the front pages around the country.

"The Administrator has told us repeatedly that in his own personal experience he has contacted hospitals and clinics and asked them relatively simple questions about their Agent Orange program and received the answer that nobody knows about it." (He then requests the names of individuals who can respond to questions.) "We suggest that it can be an administrative person who can take the initial calls if you wish, but they must be informed about your program. If they are not informed, then I suspect that we will continue to have trouble from veterans organizations and others claiming that our people do not know about the Agent Orange Program." You Bet!

A long-time friend and supporter of VVAW in Wisconsin is building an organization of civilians exposed to Agent Orange, to 2,4-D or 2,4,5-T. If you, or people you know, fall into that category, please contact:

Don Myers
Civilian Victims of
Agent Orange
5919 6th Ave
Kenosha, WI 53140
(414) 654-4411

VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE
P.O. BOX 20184
Chicago, IL 60620
(312) 651-1583

GRENADE Of The Month

This month's winner of the Grenade of the Month award is Ronnie Reagan, formerly of Death Valley Days and new quarterback for the Republican Party. Out campaigning for the presidency, Ronnie mentioned that it was too bad Vietnam vets were refused the GI Bill. While it's true that the GI Bill is no bed of roses, at least there is one.

Ronnie's excuse for this

blunder was that he listened to a retired Admiral and retired 3-star General. Just wait until the joint chiefs assure him that something as stupid as a rescue mission to Iran will have no problems whatever! As one commentator has noted, with Reagan you can walk through the waters of his mind and never get your feet wet. It would be funny if it weren't for the possibility that his wrinkled finger will be on the nuclear button.

19th NATIONAL VVAW MEETING HELD

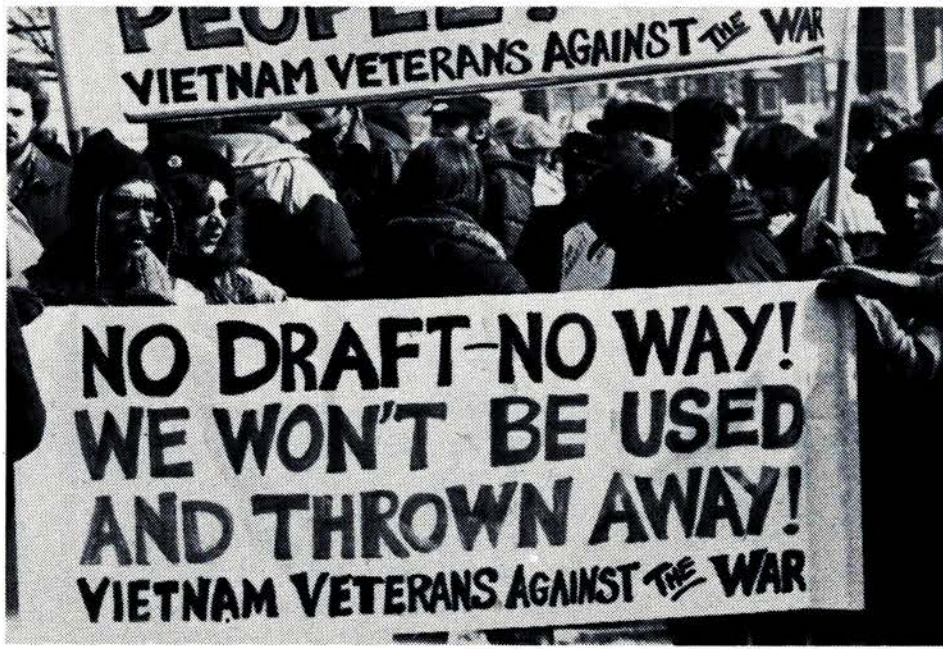
The 19th National Meeting of Vietnam Veterans Against the War opened on an upbeat note as we welcomed new chapters in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, Flint, Michigan, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, St. Louis, Missouri, and the revival of a VVAW chapter in New York City.

Interest and activity has picked up, in part because of the combination of an approaching economic disaster and an increasing threat of war, and because VVAW chapters are getting more and more involved with issues crucial to veterans. As the representative from New York City put it, "A group of us looked at the world and decided we just couldn't sit around any more. Some of us went to an anti-draft rally and met high school students who came up to us, saying, 'Where have you been? We need you!'"

Both anti-draft activities and our growing efforts to win testing, treatment and compensation for victims of Agent Orange bring us into contact with vets, often past members of VVAW. Work in various veterans coalitions has publicized our work and our political positions, often leading to workable alliances and coalitions around specific issues, and growing participation in VVAW events. Our discussion of work in coalitions brought out the conclusion that we can function well with groups whose politics we don't support, so long as the coalition has a well-defined focus--no registration, no draft, for instance. We still can't work with nuts, whose only purpose is to disrupt, like the Revolutionary Communist Party and its various offshoots or groups like the Young Spartacist League.

The meeting ended with our determination to build activities for Memorial Day, Vietnam Vets Week and May 4th at Kent State. Each of these high points on the VVAW calendar has been a time of struggle in the past, and, based on the experiences of this National Meeting, each event will be bigger and better in 1980.

To provide better communications and input into the National Office, the meeting re-instituted the National Steering Committee to consist of the N.O. and one representative chosen by each chapter, regardless of size, who would be responsible for communicating with the N.O.. The Steering Committee will meet periodically, in between our yearly national meetings. The meeting also unanimously re-



elect John Lindquist of Milwaukee and Barry Romo, Bill Davis and Pete Zastrow of Chicago as VVAW's National Coordinators.

Much of the meeting was spent in learning from others; since most chapters of VVAW are involved in similar struggles, there is much to learn from each other. Agent Orange outreach, to which 9,000 Vietnam vets in Minnesota have responded to get check-ups at the VA, a plan in which VVAW played a key role, gave all chapters some sense of how working through the state veterans bureaucracy can be useful. Milwaukee's work with lawyers and the class action suit for Agent Orange victims gave all chapters another approach to the problem. And, information concerning medical care, still in its infancy but growing, was good information for all chapters to get out to both their members, potential members, and veterans at large.

There was heated struggle, most notably around the by-laws of the Minneapolis chapter, which gives non-vets only a non-voting membership in the chapter, and which said that veterans with less than honorable discharges had to be "approved" by the chapter before they could assume full voting membership. The meeting clearly pointed to VVAW's long-standing policy that membership belonged to those who "want to join in to build a fighting veterans organization". Particularly with an issue such as Agent Orange, wives of vets, and the mothers of vets children are playing a vital role in pushing our work forward. And bad discharges, the meeting pointed out, have to be seen in their context--who gave them and for what.

VVAW has a clear and lengthy history of having seen discharges for what they are: a tool by which the military brass attempts to control the troops. And bad discharges were handed out wholesale for years, for reasons ranging from an officer who didn't like a particular GI, to refusal to obey some of the stupid orders which troops were given in Vietnam.

There was also sharp struggle around the VVAW position, as stated in THE VETERAN, concerning the demand for aid, without strings, by the U.S. government for the Afghan rebels in their fight against the Soviet invasion. VVAW has consistently opposed aggression, whether it was the U.S. aggression in Vietnam, or Vietnam's aggression against Cambodia. More than that, we have actively supported the side we saw was fighting justly as in our campaign to get Fatigues for Freedom Fighters who were dealing with white domination and aggression against the Black majority in South Africa. Our call for aid to the rebels in Afghanistan is a part of that tradition.

No one at the meeting disagreed with opposition to Soviet aggression against the people of Afghanistan. Discussion centered on aid "without strings", with some people pointing out that the U.S. government just simply doesn't give aid without conditions; that aid leads to advisors which leads to troops, which leads, as we've all seen before, to full-scale involvement. Further, we do not have the ability, at this time, to know much about the Afghan rebels. It's possible that, should they control the country, it might be worse than the situation the

Afghanis now find themselves in. At least, under those circumstances, the people of Afghanistan would control their own country, instead of being controlled from outside.

Despite these sharp, and sometimes heated, areas of struggle, the meeting united around the primary points of VVAW's program: the issues of Agent Orange, opposition to registration and the draft; with actions to take place on May 4th, Memorial Day, and during Vietnam Veterans Week. The absolute need to do all we can to build a decent life for vets far outweighs points of debate and disagreement.

Fuller discussions of many of the projects and plans discussed at the meeting appear elsewhere in the paper. The main sense throughout the meeting was that, despite working in different areas with differing circumstances, we are all working toward the same goals, and the future looks good. It's clear that, once again, VVAW is on the move, and we won't stop growing or struggling until our aims are accomplished.

LETTER

Dear Veteran,

I was one of the vets at the March 22 demonstration against the draft. My first demonstration in Washington was nine years ago. It was VVAW's Operation Dewey Canyon III, the 5 days in 1971 that was highlighted by 1000 vets throwing our war medals at the Capitol to protest the war.

I have to say that this demonstration on the 22nd was one of the best since that time. It was exciting to see the number of young people who were really just kids nine years ago. You always hear that they don't care about anything except having a good time. Well, that's a crock of shit, after seeing them in action on the 22nd.

For most of the young people, this was their first demonstration in Washington. It comes out of their need to protest the proposed draft which affects them in a similar way to that of the draft resisters of the 60's.

I hope that we Vietnam vets can help out by telling those who are faced with the draft about our experiences, so that they don't have to go through the same horrors we did to find out that we were used by the rulers of this country to do their dirty work.

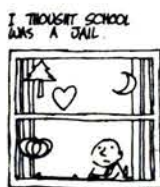
Yours Truly,
A New York City Vet

RECOLLECTIONS

The episode is one of a series of recollections from Vietnam and the military. VVAW hopes to print a book of such recollections--the "war stories" which often go a long ways toward showing what rich man's war was all about. We invite veterans to contribute their recollections

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Bill Ware-



It's 11:45 PM, the 23rd of May. It's been 13 years and the "gap" still remains. That is the "gap" that keeps Americans from feeling secure at 11:45 on a warm night in 1980. Why do they create the "gap"? This division that the main stream--and even government agencies have built between themselves and their last source of combat veterans, namely me--the Vietnam vet.

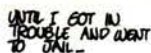


Why do they act like the enemy when they talk to me? Just today I was at the IRS field office for the Milwaukee area, trying to get a "letter"--a simple piece of paper--that gave the

date of expiration of a phoney delinquent tax bill for \$172 from 1972. This tax bill was audited during the famous Nixon audit and assessed: it was illegal for me to claim my mother as a dependent without having kept daily receipts for the food she ate and calculating her other expenses (shelter) on my 1972 tax return.



The Nixon audit said that they were disallowing the sworn statements from me and my mother stating that she was unemployed, not receiving welfare, or had any other form of income. We thought that this, along with the fact she did not file an employment tax or personal employment tax form would certainly satisfy them. They wouldn't hear

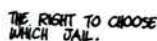
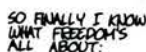


of it! They said I was a liar and a thief, and demanded the \$172 that I'd claimed for taking care of my mother. I refused. By the time it came to court nearly a year later, I was ill with what was later declared a service-connected respiratory problem.



Most of my time was spent in the hospital or at home under a doctor's care. I was convicted without being there. They passed a judgement in August, 1974, that gave them the power to forcibly collect the money.

They came to "garnishee" wages or take property, but by



that time it was too late; my home was being taken by the V.A. because I was sick with service connected disability which they denied existed when I filed for disability a couple of years after leaving Nam. "Garnishee of wages"? What a laugh. I'd lost three or four jobs by 1973, all due to illness, respiratory ailments, bronchitis, pneumonia, or acute sinusitis attacks. These were all things that the V.A. was saying were in my head but civilian doctors were saying were in my body. So the V.A. decided not to "enforce collection," but let the penalty and interest mount up without notifying me. It's now grown to \$336.43 with a six-year expiration date on collectibility.

I went to the local IRS to ask for a piece of paper stating the amount of this bogus due bill, and was refused. Why did I want the paper? I wanted to use my GI Bill to buy a home for my three-year-old son I have custody of. We live in a one-bedroom apartment and even though I'm eligible, I've been refused housing by the Milwaukee housing authority.

For every piece of paper there's a "gap." For every repossessed home from a disabled veteran, there's a wider "gap." And the widest "gap" of all?

Finding out about the deadly herbicide 2-4-5, T--Agent Orange, which poisoned so many Vietnam vets and which comes from the same people who refuse to give me my piece of paper. And that will help secure a better life for me and my son.

Why do they hate the men who fought for them? Vietnam veterans were used once and thrown away. "America eats its young" go the lyrics of a popular song of the late 1970's.

I know what my son will say when they come looking for men in the next war--and every mother's son within the sound of my voice: Hell no, we won't go. And the little "gaps" are helping Vietnam vets to make sure that's what happens.

Ghosts of Nam

James Shelton Flint, MI

I pen the following thoughts and words for you, faceless men, who march in route step, in step and close order down history's tortuous road. We ask the weighted questions: Are you victims? Have you been denied? The answer is Yes! You are victims of the biggest "lie" ever told, which encompasses the "Dulles Hysteria," the "Domino theory," "halt the spread of communism," the Tonkin Gulf "Incident," and "agent Orange." The last, whether real or imagined, you are still its victims. And you were the victims of prejudice, simply because had all of you possessed wealth for tuition, there would not have been anyone to sound "Charge," and "Charley" would never have existed.

Have you been denied? The answer again is "Yes!" You have been denied your recorded "classical battles," your "ticker-tape parades," your "corner of history," and what pains so very much, the gratitude of those for whom you perspired, cursed and bled so heavily.

But do not despair. Some march with you and find you and your "chopper call," "sapper," "wasted," "good as you can get" and "bad as you can get" language unique and fresh in a world otherways gone stale. I say again, do not fret over those who have leapt into the matrimonial bed with your enemy, and never think you have failed. No, it was those mentioned before who lost it for you. And always remember your hard-earned medals lying there on the lawn behind the iron fence will never tarnish but will remain forever, star bright!

And be there any consolation, it will be in knowing you have each other. And you men can, in any company, hold your heads high! Finally, you can make your claim on history and those architects of the "theory" who failed you so miserably, and so blithely whisper Vietnam was a mistake. Who are your historians because you and your unwritten history will drift like ghosts, though not so silently, across the pages of their minds forever.

(In an accompanying letter Mr Shelton says, "I'm 53 years of age and counting, but I know where you are coming from. I followed your war and its wrongs through its life and found it the saddest chapter of our history.")

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We would also like poetry and photos.

THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.

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