



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization

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## WAR ON V.A. GROWS



### VETS FIGHT DISABILITY CUT BACKS

**"Veterans hit the bricks,  
Can't you hear the call,  
A victory for Ted is,  
A victory for all!"**

This and other spirited chants rocked the walls of the VA Regional Office on Monday, September 8, as the Milwaukee chapter of VVAW/WSO led vets and supporters in a militant picket-line directed at the VA's attempt to cut a vet's disability rating.

Dennis (Ted) Streit, a Vietnam vet, recently received a letter from the VA. It notified him of a 50% cut in his disability for an internal injury he received in the war. He needs periodic operations to take out the excess scar tissue that grows as a result of the wound.

Publically, the Veterans Administration is talking about the new disability ratings which, they say, increase the amount of money given to disabled vets--a vet on 10% disability, for instance, now gets

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**PATIENTS JOIN DEMONSTRATION AT DETROIT V.A. HOSPITAL ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6  
VETS and V.A. WORKERS UNITE TO**

### FIGHT V.A. REPRESSION

In Detroit, the VA hospital big shots are running scared. They have every reason to be afraid since angry vets and VA workers are uniting to fight against the bad conditions and poor care and bureaucratic shuffling which goes on at the Allen Park VA hospital which is supposed to be 'serving' Detroit area veterans. Like administrators everywhere, when their little kingdoms are threatened, they try to bring down increased repression on the people.

On September 6, 45 vets, patients and hospital workers along with other workers put on a spirited demonstration right in front of the hospital entrance. VA bigwigs had threatened to

move the demonstrators off what they called "their property," but hundreds of patients and workers knew about the planned picket line and supported it, so the VA had to back off.

Vets and VA workers in Detroit, have plenty to fight about. Sanitary conditions in the hospital are so bad that one ward went three days without a bar of soap. One vet, bleeding from the mouth and rectum, was told to go home because there were no beds (in fact, there were); when he said he didn't have carfare home, the VA said he could sleep in the lobby. Another patient, after waiting 8 hours for an insulin prescription, was told he would have

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Local Address:

**"JOBS OR INCOME NOW!"**

# UWOC BUILDS STRUGGLE OF UNEMPLOYED

Everybody knows that though a few people have gone back to work, longterm unemployment is getting higher every day. As the employment rate goes up, so does the anger and determination of the people to fight back. All across the country, employed and unemployed workers are uniting to build a campaign demanding "Jobs or Income, Now!" The major force behind this campaign is the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC), an organization of employed and unemployed workers who are fed up with hearing that "things are getting better." In Cincinnati, people held a rally at the unemployment office demanding more jobs. When it started to rain, they went inside and took over the building. As one unemployed worker said, "Hell, we built the damn place." Forty people in Cincinnati also attended a forum on "How to fight the Layoffs" and took what they learned back to the workplace. There were speakers from UWOC, the Time to Unite Group from the Detroit Rouge plant (auto workers), and a rank-and-file group from the GHR Foundry in Dayton, Ohio.

The UWOC recently held demonstrations in Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, to protest the increased harassment of the unemployed and demanded (1) "Union Jobs at Union Pay," (2) "Unemployment Compensation is Our Right... Not a Privilege! No Check Delays," (3) "Stop Harassment and Speed up of State Workers... Hire More State Workers!" These demands drew enthusiastic support from both the unemployed and from state workers. After the protesters left the unemployment office, they converged on the Food Stamp Office in Seattle. The effect of the rallies in both cities was summed up best by two Seattle workers--one came out and told the UWOC picketers how the unemployment interviewer had been harassing him and tried to take away his benefits. He told the interviewer, speaking about the rally, "That's why they are out there now... To stop this kind of stuff." Another unemployed worker who joined the picketline pointed out, "This just shows the Boss who's really strong."

Other activities in Seattle have seen members of UWOC leafletting at JC Penney's in support of striking workers and asking unemployed workers not to take scab jobs

at Penney's and to boycott the store. Penney's management had been calling back former workers in an attempt to break the strike. One worker who spoke to UWOC members stated that he was having a hard time of it but he wouldn't stoop that low to cross the picket lines no matter how much Penney's was offering.

The struggle for Jobs or Income Now has really intensified in Milwaukee around the Meatcutters strike. The same bosses who are trying to cut the meatcutters' wages are trying to get unemployed workers to scab on the strike. But the bonds between the strikers and the unemployed have been forged and the director of the unemployment office has been forced to quit sending scabs to cross the picket lines. Also in Milwaukee, UWOC has been involved in fighting evictions. When the sheriff and movers came to evict a member of UWOC, he called on his friends and neighbors and UWOC who arrived promptly and stood between the evictors and the unemployed worker's furniture. The sheriff was forced to back down from his plans to confiscate the furniture to pay the back rent.

In Dayton, Ohio the fight against layoffs continues. Workers at McCall Printing Company and at the GM Inland Plant are building a fight demanding No Layoffs, and Jobs or Income Now! At McCall's, the workers on layoff hadn't been getting their subpay, a partial payment of wages for laidoff workers, and the workers on the job responded by a wildcat. Though the entire company wasn't shut down, they did win support and the laid-off workers got their subpay.



In Detroit, UWOC is fighting a bill recently passed by the Michigan legislature that increased the penalty period for workers who quit or were fired to 13 weeks, meaning they won't get any compensation for that period. Fighting against the legislation, the Detroit UWOC makes it clear that they won't accept the 13 week period and that they believe the bosses' final objective is to cut off people who quit or were fired entirely. Recent picket lines on jobs and at the unemployment offices have raised the demands of "NO Penalties," and "Jobs or Income Now!"

With the economy sagging, the people who control the wealth in this country are trying to break the backs of working people in the US with massive cutbacks and layoffs. But working people have consistently refused to take these attacks lying down as is evidenced by the recent wave of strikes such as the miners in West Virginia and teachers around the country. Particularly hard hit by this crisis are Vietnam-era vets who suffer from 15%-40% unemployment nationally. Used in the war of aggression in Indochina, they now face the "use once and throw away" attitude of US employers.

Like millions of workers across the country, veterans too are resisting the attacks on decent living standards and are uniting to fight, uniting with UWOC and other workers groups across the land. Unity and Action is Strength and Power. Everywhere, from New York to San Francisco, from Atlanta to Seattle, the campaign for Jobs or Income Now is growing stronger everyday. We're fighting for what we need to live, the only way working people ever get anything. And we're fighting to win!

## Hard Times Are Fighting Times

# DEMONSTRATE ON VETS DAY



HUNDREDS DEMONSTRATE FOR VIETNAM VETERANS DAY IN BOSTON LAST MARCH

Veterans Day, November 11, has traditionally been a National holiday devoted to parades sponsored by a few national veterans groups that march once a year to show support for the US government's current policies. A major portion of these parades has gone to mobile exhibitions of marching troops and shiny new military hardware. The public response to these Veterans Day farces has been increasingly smaller attendance with, in many cases, only relatives and friends of the marchers on the sidelines.

Conspicuously absent from the "approved parades" have been the Vietnam-era vets. Refused entrance to the official parades, Vietnam-era vets, often led by VVAW/WSO could be found in large groups, marching before and after the parades, along the sidewalks with the parades, picketting the VA and Federal buildings, and often seizing the official reviewing stands, embarrassing the hell out of the VIPs and military brass there. Under banners calling for an end to US aggression in Indochina and the world, and Decent Benefits for All Vets, these actions have been punctuated by widespread public approval and police attacks.

Veterans Day 1975 will be no exception to this recent history. Massive cutbacks in the benefits promised Vietnam-era and other vets, coupled with a growing rate of unemployment among vets as well as all working people in the US have added to the growing vets movement in this country. Vets have demonstrated and struggled in cities across the US for "Decent Benefits for All Vets," and "Jobs Or Income For All." Militant campaigns are now underway in many cities, focusing on the poor healthcare and treatment in VA hospitals, cutbacks in VA employ-

ees, late or non-existent checks and payments under the inadequate GI Bill and the many battles to cut through the VA red tape and bureaucracy. Vets Day this year will be a day of struggle that will focus on these and other demands around vets' benefits and unemployment.

Facing a crumbling economy, with the bitter taste of the Indochina defeat still in their mouths, the Ford administration (and the rich who pull their strings) are forced to look for another war to stall the crisis. Vets Day is one of the opportunities that the ruling class uses to build support for widening military activities with sham patriotism and new killing machines. VVAW/WSO has consistently said that wars like Vietnam will bring working people of the US more suffering by forcing them to once more accept the financial burden of the war and send their children off to the war as cannon fodder.

Recently Secretary of Defense Schlesinger announced plans to do away with most US Reserve and National Guard units and replace them with all military veterans up to the age of 28. These vets will be continually eligible for immediate recall to the military "in times of crisis." VVAW/WSO and many other people have made it clear that "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War" nor will we serve as strikebreakers or riot cops.

If the people that now run this country think that they can use us up in one war, treat us like trash as GIs and vets, and then re-cycle us into another war for profit in Asia or the Middle East, they're living in a dream world. Vietnam-era vets and active duty GIs will be among

the first to step forward and burst their bubble.

Veterans Day isn't another day to re-hash well-worn war stories or show off new hardware for future wars, but a day to show the rats that rule this country that we refuse to accept the conditions and treatment given Vietnam-era and other vets in the US today, and that we won't be used for their wars again. Join us!

### DEMONSTRATE ON VETERANS DAY !!!

- DECENT BENEFITS FOR ALL VETS!
- WE WON'T FIGHT ANOTHER RICH MAN'S WAR!
- JOBS OR INCOME FOR ALL!

## NEW YORK VVAW-WSO FIGHTS LATE CHECKS

Jose Rosario, a New York City vet, filled out his IBM card for payment of \$800 worth of back GI Bill checks. He was told, like vets are told around the country, that everything was fine--your check will arrive in 20 days. A month later and nothing--he was told that his card must have been lost and that he should fill out another one. And wait another 20 days. With a wife and small baby, and getting ready to start summer school, Jose didn't need excuses--he needed the cash.

At the end of 20 days, the New York City VVAW/WSO chapter organized a demonstration at the Regional VA Office, demanding an end to late checks and immediate payment for Jose. Though this was a small action, the VA is so afraid of the organized strength of angry vets that the next day, Jose got his check.

None of the VA jive about how checks have to come from Kansas, or the moon, or anywhere else that the VA tries to tell us in order to put vets off. The check came from the action officer in the VA--who is authorized to pay any vet whose checks are late.

### NO MORE LATE CHECKS !



# GLS HIT BONUS RIP-OFF

Since June 1st of this year a growing movement of sailors and their families has been fighting the Navy for refusing to pay re-enlistment bonuses promised to them. When they enlisted in the Navy, sailors who chose to go into certain skilled programs were promised a "variable re-enlistment bonus" (VRB) of \$4000 if they signed up for six years, with payment coming at the end of four years, the normal enlistment period. Now, the Navy says it won't pay up. Since June 1, 1974, when it ended the program, the Navy has refused to pay the bonus.

With over 28,000 Navy men and women affected by this action, militant struggle has brought the formation of groups fighting for the VRB in cities across the country. Lawsuits and demonstrations against the Navy have occurred in San Diego, Long Beach, San Francisco, Sacramento, Bremerton, Norfolk, Idaho Falls, Charlestown, Groton, Hawaii and Italy, with the movement still growing.

In Hawaii, sailors, with the support of VVAW/WSO have held several actions and brought four lawsuits involving 300 men against the Navy. The first lawsuit, won by the VRB Or Out group on April 29, 1975, is being appealed by the Navy.

Not content with letting the courts decide the outcome of the struggle, members of VRB Or Out and VVAW/WSO took the struggle out to sailors at the Pearl Harbor Naval Installation. Leafletting and petitioning in front of the Main Exchange, the demonstrators gathered many signatures and support from sailors at the exchange in spite of continual police harassment. Finally, 10 of the 15 leafletters were arrested by the base police on orders from the Commander of the 14th Naval District, Admiral Wentworth.

Six active-duty people were released almost immediately to their commands. Next released was a Navy wife who had joined the VRB fight. All of these people were charged with the "crime" of "solicitation." The only people remaining were three civilian members of VVAW/WSO who had refused to cooperate with the base police by giving identification or submitting to fingerprinting. For four hours, the police tried to find someone to turn them over to, realizing that the base police had no jurisdiction over them. After trying the FBI and the US District Attorney's office, the Navy was forced to release all three without charges, a clear victory for all involved in the local VRB struggle.

As a result of the struggle for overdue payment on the re-enlistment bonus, people involved have come to realize that the issue of military repression is as important as the fight for the VRB. Just as the police and courts are used



against workers striking for a decent living so are they used against sailors and other GIs when they demand their rights.

The activities of the Hawaii VRB Or Out continued on August 2nd with picketing and leafletting at Ft Derussy, followed by a short rally and picnic. In all, some 40 sailors and supporters attended to support the growing VRB struggle.

The VRB Or Out group has pledged to continue the struggle against the Navy with militant actions to bring more sailors into the struggle. As one of the Hawaii VRB Or Out leaflets said, "The Navy has abused the rights of sailors for too long! It is time we all stand together to put a stop to this situation! When we fight for these rights we are fighting for all of us! When they attack any one of us, it is an attack upon all of us."

## P.O. CONTRACT PASSES, STRUGGLE CONTINUES

President Ford called it the pacesetter of labor contracts for 1975. It was a pacesetter all right, a pacesetter for the increasing attacks on the living and working conditions of the working class. The recent postal workers contract is one of the worst in recent years, a stab in the back for working people everywhere.

While the contract does keep the no-layoff clause, a victory for the postal workers as the bosses knew that the workers would go out on strike to keep it, the rest of the contract is rotten, the result of sellout union leadership working hand-in-hand with the Postal Corporation. While telling the workers they would not settle for anything less than a 5% raise, the union "leaders" negotiated just 4% per year over the three-year run of the contract. Along with the lousy raise, there was no improvement in the retirement program, little improvement in benefits and a cost of living "escalator" clause that actually amounts to a cut in wages.

Even the way the "yes" vote on the contract was obtained stank, bringing back memories of the phoney "yes" vote on the last contract when thousands of postal

workers never even saw the contract or received a ballot.

But in the fight to get a decent contract, the postal workers gained much. With the unions controlled by sellout hack leaders, workers organized themselves nationwide, relying on the rank and file and not the big hacks. From the rank-and-file postal group in New York and New Jersey, OUTLAW, went the call for the formation of the Postal Workers for a Good Contract--National Committee (PWGC). Workers from over thirty cities responded to the call, including workers from other industries who supported the postal workers struggle. Some local unions even supported the work of PWGC, helping to get out the national newsletter of the committee. Demonstrations were held all over the country, focusing on the key demands such as keeping the no-layoff clause and no forced arbitration. Over 2500 postal workers demonstrated in Washington, DC where the negotiations were taking place, putting pressure on union leadership not to sell them out.

VVAW/WSO joined with the PWGC in many cities to help bring the fight to postal workers everywhere. Many veterans work in the Postoffice, especially in programs that try to use vets to scab on regular postal workers as "temps" (temporary help). Vets in these programs are denied any of the benefits due regular workers; no overtime, no protection from layoff, and often lower wages have shown that the fight of the regular postal workers is the fight of veterans.

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# MILITANT MARCH ON LABOR DAY



Over 200 people marched on Labor Day in Milwaukee demanding VICTORY TO THE MEATCUTTERS and JOBS OR INCOME, NOW! The spirited march was led by unemployed workers and striking meatcutters. Following them were workers from plants around the city, veterans and students. VVAW/WSO had a contingent as did the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee and the Committee to Fight Police Repression.

Because the march was held as 80,000 miners were out on strike in the East and Mid-west there were many signs and banners calling for VICTORY TO THE COAL MINERS, and chants of MEATCUTTERS, MINERS-SAME STRUGGLE, SAME FIGHT! rang out along the parade route.

Some people who watched the parade joined in the march. One family, kids and all, joined as the march went by their

home. Many others came out on their porches and from taverns to voice support and solidarity. Everyone was really enthusiastic, including 17 kids from the Kasner housing project who had their own contingent and carried a banner they made themselves reading, "Find our Parents Jobs."

After the march there was a rally and a picnic held in Reservoir Park. At the rally speakers talked about the meatcutters strike and why it was an important battle of working people in Milwaukee. About 750 meatcutters have been on strike since January fighting against wage cuts, rate cuts, inflation and a new job classification. A meatcutter spoke about the long strike and about the way the workers are standing fast in their demands, in spite of the fact that the meat packing companies are using scabs to try and break the strike. He thanked everyone for their support and called for continued

help. He said, "When we go back in, the scabs got to go. We've all been on strike this long together. We all go back together--or nobody goes."

Recently a Meatcutters Solidarity Committee was formed made up of workers from around the city who see this as a key battle. This worker's committee marched in the parade and called on the people at the rally to join with them.

Other speakers talked about the fight of unemployed workers for jobs or income, the coal miners strike and the fight of transportation workers against discrimination. A VVAW/WSO speaker talked about the struggle that veterans are waging in Milwaukee around the VA disability cutback of Ted Streit.

The speaker from the Revolutionary Union gave a short history of Labor Day and told how it was originally set up by the ruling class in opposition to May Day, the international holiday of the working class. He quoted from the Milwaukee Sentinel that "labor and capital could work together to build a better world." And then he went on to explain that labor and capital don't work together on anything; that big business owners and the top labor officials work hand-in-hand to try and keep workers down. Citing the meatcutters, the coal miners and the thousands of people fighting for jobs, he told how the real fights are being waged by working people themselves.

After the rally everyone enjoyed a barbecued chicken dinner with beer and soda. One of the reasons for the success of Labor Day was the fact that prior to it people went all over the city building for the march. Posters were put up on vacant buildings around Milwaukee. Many small shopkeepers put posters in their store windows. In addition, several days before the march people went door-to-door through the community surrounding Holton Street and talked to their neighbors about the march and why it was being held. Almost everyone thought it was a good way to celebrate Labor Day.

Three days before the march a car with a bullhorn went around the city explaining the demands and inviting people to join in the march and rally. Once, people came out of a tavern and talked about the demands. Another time, a striking meatcutter pulled up to the car and showed the driver petitions that he had been gathering, and stated that he would be at the march with his family.

Even though Labor Day was meant to have one meaning, it was obvious by the militance and unity of the march, rally and picnic, that working people see Labor Day as a day to continue the daily struggle for decent lives.

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## Teachers & Students Unite for

# DECENT EDUCATION



The beginning of this fall's school term has seen one of the largest waves of teachers' strikes to hit the US in years. All across the country, teachers with the support of millions of students, have gone out on strike for higher wages and better working conditions, and against attacks on the standard of education in the US. Just as all other areas of social services in this country have come under attack--unemployment compensation, welfare, veterans' benefits--so too the educational system in the US is under attack. But just as hard as the rich try to palm off their economic crisis on us, people are uniting and fighting back against them.

In Chicago, over 27,000 public school teachers went out on strike for 11

days for higher wages, smaller class sizes and better working conditions. The strike affected over 530,000 school children. In New York City, 65,000 teachers shut down public schools for the city's 1.1 million students. There, the issue was not salary increases but school board attempts to enlarge classes, reduce or eliminate teachers' preparation time and cut out a number of school programs. While the NYC Board of Education had initially asked for a \$500 million increase for the impoverished school system, the city of New York instead demanded a \$132 million CUT in the school budget. Similar school strikes occurred in hundreds of communities across the US.

The struggle teachers have been waging for better education and a higher

standard of living is only the tip of the iceberg. In fact the entire educational system is under attack by the ruling class. Facing a desperate economic crisis, these fat cats are frantically scrambling about seeking more and more profits so they won't go under. In doing so they are forced to try to find ways of cutting back on budgets for those social services that do exist but which don't bring in profits. So they try to make us foot their bills for the economic crisis. Cutbacks or complete elimination of educational programs are coming down, tuition costs for many schools are soaring, cuts in financial aid are being made, and the number of teachers is being reduced while they try to cram ever larger numbers of students into already crowded classrooms. The State of Illinois a-

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## G.I. BILL UNDER ATTACK

The first GI Bill, called the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, might appear to have been created by an act of "gratitude" on the part of Congress for returning World War II veterans. In reality, that first GI Bill came as the result of an intense struggle carried on by veterans of the First World War in the 1930's, joined later by World War II vets, a struggle which continued up until the Bill was passed. While the intent of the Bill may have been to placate returning vets, the vets both needed and used the newly won benefits.

The Korean Conflict Legislation of August 20, 1952, and the Cold War Bill of June 1, 1966, were both hailed as vast improvements on the World War II GI Bill because they provided extended periods of eligibility for receiving and using the benefits. On the surface, this change looked good, but what really was going on was a drastic change in the distribution of benefits. And this change has continued up to the present; it is the key to understanding the inadequacy of the present GI Bill compared to the 1944 model.

Under that first GI Bill, vets automatically had the cost of their education (tuition, books and fees) paid for them and then received an additional allowance for living expenses. Vietnam-era vets receive a straight monthly allowance for education that is supposed to pay for all educational expenses plus living expenses. WW II vets got enough money, up to \$500, to pay for educational expenses, plus \$75 for their monthly living expense.

At the 1948 purchasing value, \$75 was nearly equal to the cash which vets get today when we receive \$270 per month (for a single vet) to pay for everything. And that doesn't meet the cost of living expenses, much less anything leftover to go to school and pay inflated fees there. While it seems to be more money, it falls nearly 300% short of the WWII Bill.

The cost of education today, nearly triple what it was in 1948, and the cost of living, which rose 14% in 1974 alone have made the GI Bill today a mere shadow of the WW II version. Since WW II, each year has brought a yearly review of the evaluation procedures that determine eligibility for disability benefits, who gets them, and how much. Each year has also brought, through these procedures, steady cutbacks in the number of these benefits given out and the shrinking amounts for various disabilities. In August, Ford signed a bill hiking benefits 10-12% for disabilities, an action that was given headlines of a tremendous advance in veterans benefits. This "tremendous" advance didn't even cover the cost of living rise of 14% in 1974 alone!

The Veterans Administration is a sham. You can't get a VA-bank financed loan if you can't get a job. Benefit checks mean nothing if you don't get them. An example of this non-function of the VA is the case of Randy Richmond, a vet who attends the Long Beach City College in Long Beach, California. Randy has gone nearly 9 months without a GI Bill check. Finally, when several mem-

bers of the Long Beach VVAW/WSO chapter went with Randy and jammed the campus vet rep office, it was discovered that his name for the checks hadn't been entered into the computer. Waiting three more weeks, they returned, and found that Randy was still not entered. At present, Randy is surviving on part-time jobs and emergency loans.

Randy's case and the struggle that continues around it isn't isolated or unusual. There are thousands upon thousands of vets experiencing the same problems or worse from the VA. Vietnam-era vets are literally fighting for their survival.

With the national economy going down the drain, the people that run this country see the VA as a prime place to cut back financially. Not satisfied to undermine the GI Bill for existing vets, last spring, Ford and his friends in Congress introduced legislation to eliminate the GI Bill entirely for people currently in, or soon to be in, the military. At the same time, Ford completely did away with many existing benefits by Presidential Proclamation (described in the June/July issue of Winter Soldier). The current legislation is floating around the House and Senate waiting for the right moment to jam it through with as little public attention as possible. But the struggle for decent benefits and a GI Bill won't be won in the halls of Congress. Only through the strength and unity of people fighting to prevent these cutbacks and poor VA conditions will any real change come about.

# V.A. RESPONSIBLE

What the Veterans Administration is calling "mysteries" are plaguing the VA hospital system. In Ann Arbor, the VA is admitting that as many as 11 veterans have died from unexplained cases of breathing failure: the VA bureaucrats there and the FBI which was called in to investigate say there might be a mystery murderer prowling the halls of the VA hospital. At the VA hospital in Chicago, an investigation into the case of Erwin Pawelski--a Marine vet who was mute and confined to a wheelchair when he was "lost" for 25 hours--has found no answer to the mystery of his disappearance. At the Manhattan VA hospital, 6 patients in five weeks came out of one operating room with serum hepatitis (which is caused by such blunders as dirty needles or bad blood); rather than deal with this criminal error, the VA quickly discharged the affected patients.

What's going on? The VA hospital system is the largest hospital system in the country. Yet, only 15% of eligible vets even use the hospitals and the medical care promised to us when we were in the military. Why? Though there are individual VA hospitals which are better than others, VA hospitals in general have a well-deserved reputation as butcher shops, as warehouses in which older vets are left to die, or as drug dispensaries where patients are doped up (without being told what's being done to them) instead of treated. Top heavy with administrators instead of people involved in direct patient care, and with inadequate staffs, the VA is still trying to cut back on the number of VA workers. This can only make a bad situation worse, as it will speed up the already overworked staff.

At the Ann Arbor VA, 35 patients suffered a total of 56 different attacks of respiratory failure; as many as 11 patients died (these are the figures from the FBI investigation which is not yet complete). These 56 breathing failures

happened between the 1st of July and the 15th of August, in a hospital where 5 such cases in a month are considered "normal." And, with all the record-keeping which goes on in any VA hospital (what the hell else are all the overpaid administrators and bureaucrats doing?), it took 56 total cases and three cases in a row on one evening to alert the VA to the fact that something was wrong. Later investigation found that the cause of these failures was the injection of Pavulon, a powerful paralyzing drug used to relax throat muscles during surgery.

The VA immediately "discovered" that negligence on the part of the VA was not to blame. But what else accounts for the time involved in finding something was wrong? At this time the VA and FBI are trying to blame a mysterious psychopath running amok in the hospital. But vets who have fought to get decent care from VA hospitals know where the blame really lies--and that is right in the lap of the VA. Despite the dedicated work of thousands of VA nurses, doctors, and other workers, the VA bureaucracy is dominated by the mentality which says "Use once and throw away." All the promises and guarantees which the military used to get us to fight their rich man's wars don't mean a damn thing: once they've gotten their use out of us, the care we get from their hospital system doesn't matter anymore, because there isn't any profit in it.

Because there is no profit, and because vets who go to the VA for treatment are usually there because they can't afford private care, the VA has consistently used these patients as guinea pigs for new drugs, new techniques, new ideas in medicine which have not yet been proved. In one case a couple of years ago, a doctor in the Long Beach VA hospital caused a number of vet/patients to go blind through one of his "experiments"; the result was that his "license to experiment" was taken away--he is still a doctor working at the VA hospital there. The same kind of callous disregard for the health and lives of patients goes on in the welfare wards of hospitals all over the country--if there's no profit to be

made, then the patient is a likely subject for experimentation. And, because the medical profession in the US is based on profit, the experimenting doctors seldom if ever let the patient know what is being done.

If the VA was conniving to experiment in Ann Arbor, you can bet they'll use every device to cover up. The "psychopathic killer on the loose" idea now being pushed is one more device to turn attention away from the real criminal--the VA system itself. And this is true even if there were a killer in Ann Arbor.

In Chicago, Erwin Pawelski was lost for 25 hours; from all reports, it appears as if he spent those hours riding in an elevator strapped to his wheelchair and unable to ask for help. The VA, after an investigation, now has decided that he could not have been in the elevator all that time, though they cannot say where he was. An unnamed and undiscovered "volunteer worker" is being blamed for that blunder. But only the loud demands of Pawelski's wife brought the case to the public's attention, and in fact led the VA to search the hospital to find the "misplaced" vet.

It's not only by trying to shuffle off the blame on to mysterious psychopaths or volunteers that the VA hopes to distract attention from its own criminal neglect. The newest goodie, which the VA is trying to use to distract patients, is a tour of VA hospitals in 11 cities by the Penthouse magazine "Pet of the Year." But vets know that what we need is not Penthouse tours or lengthy investigations to decide that mistreatment and murder of vets is still a "mystery"; we need decent care, and we aren't getting it.

Let's put the blame where it belongs --on the VA, topheavy with bureaucrats, drowning in its own red tape, and operated with the "don't give a damn" attitude toward vets it's supposed to serve. Put the blame on the government and the system which says ignore anything which doesn't turn a profit, and which is now trying to cut back more on the dangerously low VA staffs and facilities.



# EDITORIAL VETS UNITE TO FIGHT

Veterans are uniting and fighting back against our oppression. Everywhere we look across the country we can see the struggles veterans are waging. Vets in New York City have been fighting against the VA methadone program. In Detroit vets have united around demanding decent health care in the VA hospital. In Chicago the case of Joe Blanco's disability cut-back has won the support of hundreds of veterans. In Milwaukee the VA has threatened to cut the disability of Ted Streit and vets are uniting to fight the cutback. In Long Beach, California and in St. Louis vets are fighting for decent benefits. There are other cases of how vets are getting sick and tired of the runaround we get trying to collect the meager benefits promised by the VA and the ruling class of this country.

The Veterans Administration, created in 1930 after much struggle by veterans, was set up to keep vets in line rather than to serve the interests of vets. How many of us have had experiences with the VA where we had our head spin in confusion trying to figure out what they were saying or doing? Just about every vet has some personal horror story about VA treatment, whether it's waiting for that long overdue check or waiting for medication in a VA hospital.

So what do we do about it and how do we get together to fight back? VVAW/WSO has been working to answer these questions for several years now. We began as an organization because Vietnam vets saw the war in Indochina as wrong due to our personal experiences there. VVAW was formed to try to do our part in ending the war. Gradually it became clear to us that there was more to being a basically vets organization than just protesting against the war in Indochina, even though that was our main thrust. It grew clear that veterans were joining VVAW (or looked to the organization as one in which they could join), to fight back against attacks coming down on us.

In the process of understanding the struggles of vets, a debate began in the organization: should we build a fighting veterans group or should we be some up-in-the-sky organization that would take up every struggle in some half-assed way and not work around veteran's issues. In December of 1974, VVAW/WSO made a great leap forward when it decided to build the vets movement. We adopted some ideas around a national program based on what we had learned from working with other vets at VA facilities around the

country.

In July of this year the organization took another leap forward in coming up with a more developed program of uniting with other veterans in the fight against the VA. Our national program attacks the specific ways the system -- which sent us to fight in Vietnam, which causes unemployment at home, which mishandles the VA facilities, and which is preparing for another war -- is dealing with vets.

What problems do vets face? Well, for starters vets have a really high unemployment rate. Vets with jobs are saddled with speed-up and the threat of being laid-off. We demand decent jobs at decent wages. And if we can't find jobs we want a decent income. That's why Jobs or Income for All is a major demand of ours.

Without a job, many of us turned to the VA to get some of the benefits we were promised and found instead disability cutbacks, late school checks, bureaucratic red tape and military-type harassment in applying for loans and other so-called benefits. VVAW/WSO's program speaks to the need for veterans to unite and fight back against these cutbacks and harassment.

Even if we have a job or collect from the GI Bill, in most cases the payments are inadequate. We must demand a GI Bill at least equal to that received by WW II vets. And finally we must fight against the rotten conditions in VA hospitals. Good health care means adequately staffed hospitals and decent medical attention. We aren't going to take any more deaths like the ones at the Ann Arbor VA Hospital.

There are lots of things we were promised when we went into the military. When we got out we found a lot of these promises were nothing but hot air. It's right and necessary for us to fight for what we got coming to us, because our benefits will never be 'given' to us. And we don't want decent benefits at the expense of other working people. The whole system is run by the rich even though working people have created everything. The struggle of veterans is part of the overall worker's struggle for decent lives. In the course of this struggle we join with other working people in the fight against attacks on our living standards.

Because this system is in a dire economic crisis, the ruling class tries to put

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## VETS F



**PICKET-LINE DEMANDING "HANDS OFF TED'S DISABILITY" IN MILWAUKEE**

\$36 per month instead of \$32 per month. According to the VA, this increase is a kind of "gift" from the government to offset the rocketing cost of living in this inflated economy. In fact what is happening is that the VA is taking a number of vets and slashing their disability payments, probably hoping to make up for the increases that vets fought to get.

VVAW/WSO chapters around the country are taking up cases where disabled vets are getting screwed by the VA-- in Chicago to win 100% disability for Joe Blanco, in Long Beach (California) around the case of Vic Mondragon, and in Milwaukee around the case of Ted Streit. Decent benefits for all vets is a demand raised by vets from coast to coast.

Ted Streit, a member of the Milwaukee VVAW/WSO, came to the chapter and said he wanted to fight the VA cutback. Other members of the chapter were enthusiastic about going out to vets to build support for Ted's case, seeing that vets have to get together and fight attempts to rob us of what's ours.

The chapter wrote a leaflet talking about Ted's case and how it isn't isolated from what's happening to thousands of vets across the country--it's part of a general series of cutbacks, from the VA to the unemployment lines, from the

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# FIGHT CUT BACKS

schools to the welfare lines. Anything that doesn't turn a profit for the bosses and their lackeys is on the drawing board to be sliced. The leaflet and a petition were used to go out and talk to hundreds of vets; and, during this time, it grew clearer and clearer that the VA is screwing vets around and that vets are fighting mad.

As the day approached for Ted's appeal hearing, the VA was running scared even before the 35 people came out for the picket-line and to jam the VA's phone hearing. Three days before the hearing, the VA called Ted to tell him there had been a big mistake! He still had to have a hearing, they said, but his disability would not be cut until after a full review. They said they had previously given him the wrong kind of exam and he would be scheduled for a future physical. In other words, they re-instated his 40% disability rating.

This victory was closely followed by another: the VA opened the doors for a fully open hearing, the first time anywhere. This is completely opposite from the usual closed, backroom shaft session that the VA calls a "Review Hearing" where even the vet concerned is not allowed to hear what the VA is deciding about him. So, when 35 people went in, the VA bureaucrats were shaking and asking if 30 chairs would be enough or if they should set up more! When the hearing got ready to roll, the VA stuffed shirts tried to gloss over the fact that VVAW/WSO was acting as Ted's representative, since for years they've tried to say that we're not a "legitimate" veterans organization (meaning that we're not like the American Legion or VFW which parrot the lines of the VA).

In the midst of all the Board's jive questions they asked how much money Ted made? At this, the whole room exploded: "What the hell is that to his disability? Let's face facts: Ted didn't get shrapnel wounds playing jacks down on Mitchell Street. He got it fighting in that rich man's war." Since when did the VA look at a retiring General and ask him how much money he makes, much less if he got his wound in combat or on the golf course?

When all the facts had been presented, the bureaucrats asked if the chapter had anything more to say. Yes, there was a closing statement. But, when the chapter started to tell them about all the vets that they were screwing around, and how VVAW/WSO is going to take up more and more of their cases to fight for the vets involved, the 3-man review board cut the taped official record and high-tailed it back to the safety of their cozy offices, saying that they'd send down

"someone to deal with your questions." That turned out to be the assistant regional director and two of his flunkies.

During the "discussion" that followed the assistant director tried in vain to sooth the anger of the vets who had attended the hearing. One after another, vets backed this VA worm up against the wall and strafed him for the red-tape run-around they had gotten from the VA. All he could say as the vets left was that he really was interested in vets' welfare, but sometimes there just wasn't anything he could do. More of the usual VA lies. On Sept 24th, when Ted was scheduled for his physical exam, 30 angry vets went with him to the hospital. Scared silly by the angry group, the VA chiefs sent out a couple of flunkies to negotiate. The physical exam, which normally takes three days while the VA plays its harassment games took a total of three hours. The VA moves quick when it's under the gun.

In Chicago, the VVAW/WSO chapter is also fighting for open hearings. Joe Blanco, an ex-paratrooper, was severely injured; the VA "awarded" him a 10% disability rating--which meant \$32 per month and, under the new rating scale, a "whopping" \$36 per month. \$36 goes nowhere when, like Joe, a vet is unable to work--in fact, it just about pays for carfare to the VA.

Beginning in May, the VVAW/WSO fought alongside Joe in the struggle to get 100% disability and to force an open hearing around his case. Each time they have gone to the VA with more people; the last confrontation saw a couple of dozen angry, yelling people planting themselves in the lobby while the VA bosses

hid. Shortly afterwards, Joe received a phone call from the veterans service officer setting up an appointment with an orthopedic surgeon--and the VA had never even gone that far in helping Joe before. Neither Joe nor the members of the chapter are satisfied with that kind of half-stepping, though, and continue to demand 100% disability.

Part of the campaigns in both Chicago and Milwaukee have been through petitions which have been signed by hundreds of vets and VA workers uniting in the demands of the campaign, including decent benefits for all vets. One veteran, now in his 80's, signed the petition in Chicago and told of his experience in fighting to get 10% disability payments for his lungs which were damaged by mustard gas during the First World War.

Vets from before the Vietnam war have also united behind a petition campaign building support for Vic Mondragon in Long Beach, California. Vic, a disabled Vietnam-era vet, is also unable to work; the VA has "given" him a 60% disability rating, even though a letter from his doctor says he should be getting 100%. Instead of meeting Vic's real needs, however, the VA keeps trying out its newest "miracle pill," using Vic as a guinea pig while they stall giving him the money that he needs.

Disability payments are just one more area where cutbacks are crunching down on vets. Around the country VVAW/WSO is uniting with other vets to fight to win the needed payments for individual vets and, at the same time, expose the VA's pretense of "serving veterans." When the VA, and the system it is part of, says Cutback, VVAW/WSO says FIGHT BACK, and the fight is going on until we win.



**CHICAGO CHAPTER OF VVAW-WSO CONFRONTS V.A. HACK, GEORGE PENN**

## ANTI A&H BOMB CONFERENCE BUILDS

# INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP

A VVAW/WSO representative, Bill Davis from the National Office, recently attended the 21st World Conference Against A&H Bombs in Japan. The Conference was sponsored by Gensuikyo, a Japanese Coalition of peace groups, on this, the 30th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The Conference Against A&H Bombs took place over a ten-day period, August 1-10, with rallies, meetings, speeches, and demonstrations in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki with several side trips and demonstrations at US military installations. Tours of the sites of the atomic bombings and hospitals of A-bomb victims forcefully brought home the barbaric realities of nuclear war. At the Conference the major topic of discussion was the prevention of future nuclear holocausts like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the danger of the US provoking a world war. This is an issue that the masses of Japanese people have taken up, struggling for a total ban on nuclear weapons. Recently the US government has threatened war in Korea and the Middle East, a war that could bring about World War III. As part of this threat, the Ford administration has insinuated that tactical nuclear weapons would be used in this aggression.

The Japanese people are also calling for the abolition of the sham treaty between Japan and the US that prohibits the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan and Okinawa, and provides for a Japanese "self-defense force" for defense of Japan. The US military has systematically violated the treaty by bringing nuclear weapons and materials into Japan and is presently building the Japanese Self-Defense Force into a major offensive military force that will serve US interests in Asia.

Organizations and governments of 23 countries were represented at the Conference with delegates from 15 international organizations. Some of the countries represented were the DRV, the PRG, Laos, Micronesia, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Democratic Peoples Republic of South Yemen, Namibia, Democratic Chile (in exile), Cuba, and many



(Left to Right) Dino Jones, MARIANAS FUTURE ORGANIZATION, Dang Quang Minh, member Central Committee of NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT of SOUTH VIETNAM, Bill Davis, VVAW, clasp hands in International solidarity at Tokyo rally of 10,000 people.

others.

VVAW/WSO's role at the Conference as part of the US delegation was to promote international solidarity with the demands of the Japanese peoples' struggle to abolish nuclear weapons, bring about a total withdrawal of US military forces from Japan, Okinawa, and Korea, and prevent another US war of aggression in Asia. Another important aspect of VVAW/WSO's work at the Conference was to establish international ties of friendship and solidarity with representatives of various organizations and countries present on behalf of the growing veterans movement in the US.

Key events of the trip were the demonstrations and rallies at several US military installations where Bill Davis, representing VVAW/WSO, addressed GIs and their families calling for friendship and solidarity between American GIs and the Japanese people, and the withdrawal of US forces from Japan. In one instance, at the Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station, GIs were physically harassed and arrested for demonstrating and showing support in a spontaneous demonstration inside the base. Several discussions and meetings were held with GIs and GI organizers there.

A highpoint of the Conference came as Mr Dang Quang Minh, member of the Central Committee of the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam and Bill Davis of VVAW/WSO spoke together on stage at the Tokyo rally before an estimated audience of 10,000 Japanese

delegates to the Gensuikyo Conference in an intense show of US-Vietnamese solidarity that brought several minutes of thunderous applause.

Prior to the opening of the Tokyo Conference, Gensuikyo arranged a meeting between the Vietnamese delegation, comprised of five representative from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and four from the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG), and the American delegation of 26 people representing a variety of classes in the US.

The meeting between the two delegations was a highly historic occasion since this was the first official meeting between the American and Vietnamese people since the end of the war. After a full day of messages of friendship and solidarity, gifts, and cultural exchanges, the people in attendance issued the Tokyo Declaration of Peace and Friendship of July 30, 1975. The declaration, a people-to-people statement, emphasized the continued friendship between the Vietnamese and American people, expressed elation at the ending of the Vietnam War, and fortified the struggle for reconstruction of Vietnam.

The Conference successfully united many people from around the world in opposition to the US aggressive foreign policy and the threat of a US provoked world war. The most important lesson shared was that a people united, as in Vietnam, can and will defeat an enemy regardless of its technology or weaponry. In any struggle it is the majority of people who make history, not nuclear weapons.

# MINERS GO BACK BUT FIGHT'S NOT OVER



## WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

The recent wildcat strike of soft coal miners begun this August in Logan County, W. VA. is now over. The month-long strike involved 90,000 coal miners, about 75% of all United Mine Worker members, and had spread to Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia and Illinois before it ended. However, the conditions giving rise to the strike and the demands the miners fought for remain the same. The miners, like all workers, face a situation where they must fight or be crushed, so in one way or another the fight will continue.

The coal miners have a long and militant history, especially in recent years, of wildcat strikes. They learned a long time ago that you have to fight to survive in the coal fields and that the strike was one of their primary weapons. With the current economic crisis deepening, the coal companies have stepped up their attempts to smash the miners' wildcats to increase productivity and destroy their ability to fight back. The companies have used hundreds of court injunctions against the UMW to prevent wildcats, fining both the union and individual miners for violations of these injunctions.

In the 1974 contract struggle, thousands of miners demanded an end to the injunctions and fought for the right to strike to be included in their grievance procedure. They were sold out in this however when UMW President Arnold Miller 'traded away' the right to strike. Then in June the UMW leaders set up a wildcat strike commission to 'crack down' on the miners' strikes.

Despite the companies' and union leadership's attempts to control or break the wildcats, strikes have continued and hatred for the injunctions has grown. It was against this background that the most recent strike spread like wildfire throughout the coalfields as miners united together,

demonstrating, picketing, and fighting the cops that tried to stop them.

Uniting around the battle cry, "Stop the Injunctions - We Demand the Right to Strike", the miners also raised the demands against the firings, suspensions and jail sentences handed out during the strike against the runaround grievance procedure used by the coal companies. Their contract has two words in it, "binding arbitration" that mean that the companies can do whatever they want and the workers can't strike in retaliation until the company controlled courts 'rule' on the grievance. A leaflet put out by the Miners Committee to Defend the Right to Strike, a rank and file group active in the strike, summed up what the workers already felt: "Did a Federal judge build our union, did a politician give us gas, did an umpire give us Black Lung compensation? NO, only our struggle won these things. We need a new grievance procedure but one that does away with the umpire and gives us the right to strike."

In the face of the massive pressure of the coal companies, union hacks, cops, courts, injunctions, jailings and fines, the miners have ended the strike. At present there is a lull in the fighting, an orderly retreat, in order to be better able to fight another day. Even though the strike is over without complete victory, the miners are in a stronger position than before for the next battle. The miners have learned through the wildcat that without the strike weapon, legal or not, the companies will take more and more advantage of their 'right' to work the miners to death for the sake of their profits. The issues are clearer than ever before to thousands of miners and workers all over the US; the way to fight is clearer; and the role of union hacks, like Miller, who consistently sabotaged the miners struggle is clearer. The next time around the miners are going to be one hell of a lot stronger!

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## VETS UNITE . . .

the crisis on our backs, while at the same time it is locked into a life and death struggle with the other world superpower, the Soviet Union, in a battle for who controls markets abroad. While fighting against attacks here on us in this country, we fight against the threat of another war. As vets we have seen first hand what these wars are for; for the rich.

All of these problems that face vets will be tackled. The program adopted at our National Steering Committee Meeting held in July speaks to them, and the overwhelming majority of people in our organization united behind that program. Several chapters did not. These people are no longer in the organization as they chose instead to turn their backs on the struggles of veterans. VVAW/WSO has now gotten rid of these people and can more fully unite with veterans who are getting screwed by the system.

And that is the key to our program and the key to the fight that we must wage for ourselves. Only through unity and militant mass action will we win our demands. When one veteran goes to the VA, he could get lost in the red-tape shuffle. But when 100 or 1,000 vets go to the VA we get results! And as attacks on vets get worse there is more of a need for us to get together to fight back against them. VVAW/WSO has become the kind of organization capable of uniting veterans to fight back; not to beg for crumbs and settle for half victories, but to really fight in the interests of all veterans by fighting to win!

**JOIN US!**

**BUILD THE FIGHTING VETS  
MOVEMENT!**

(Copies of our national program will be available soon. Contact your local chapter for more information.)

*for more  
information  
or the address of  
the nearest  
chapter,*

**VVAW/WSO**

**827 W NEWPORT  
Chicago, ILL.  
60657**

**312-935 2129**

# 'CLEMENCY' BOARD SHUTS DOWN

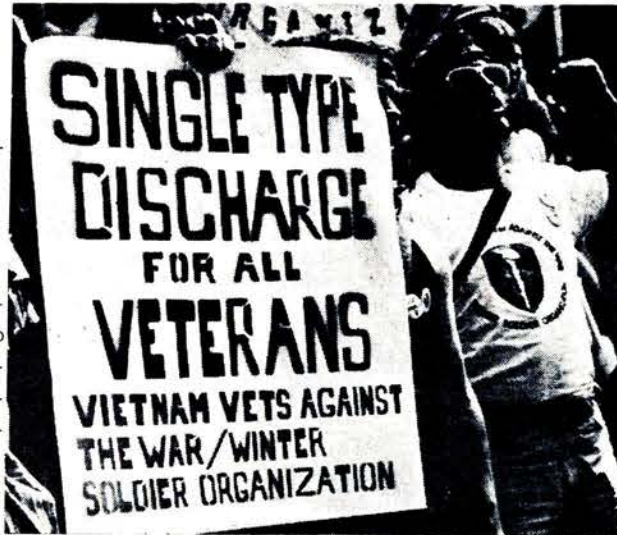
On September 15, President Ford's Clemency Board closed down after being in business for one year. It closed down not with a bang, but with a whimper as the board panel of 18 members began bickering about who among them were the good guys and who were the bad guys. Four members were busy writing a minority report stating that they thought the panel was too 'lenient' because they handed out too many clemencys for people who were charged with being AWOL. The other front men for Ford's program remained silent, including Father Theodore Hesburgh, the big shot 'liberal', ex-President of Notre Dame University who hadn't even bothered to show up at the board hearings since early June.

During the last few weeks that the panel deliberated cases they developed a "morale problem" so they were given special treats to help get them through their "grim, grubby job" according to a board spokesman. These treats included a cocktail party and cruise down the Potomac River on the Presidential yacht, autographed pictures of Ford and a chance to work at Camp David, the Presidential retreat where they could enjoy the swimming pool, the bowling alley, the movie theater and the servants all surrounded by the scenic views of the mountains in Maryland. "Each case they consider requires agony and soul searching" was the official explanation given for the treats.

The Clemency Board was set up September 16, 1974 when Ford announced the earned re-entry program for Vietnam war resisters. As soon as it was announced, organizations of exiles living in Canada and Europe met at a conference in Toronto, Ontario and denounced the plan as being punitive and not in the interests of the thousands and thousands of people who resisted the war in Indochina, including the over 580,000 veterans who received less-than-honorable discharges during the Vietnam war years. They called for a boycott of the program which was supported by many organizations in the United States including VVAW/WSO. One of the demands put forward also was for a single-type discharge for all vets who received the bad discharges.

The boycott was a resounding success in the struggle for a universal and unconditional amnesty for all war resisters during the Vietnam-era. As of September 15th when the board shut down only 15,000 out of an approximate 120,000 people eligible even bothered to apply for a clemency, according to the board itself.

Even those who did apply soon took leave of the program. Of the 4,500 military deserters who applied for clemency over 3,000 are no longer with the program. These vets are now saddled with undesirable discharges. Some had to quit because the alternative service jobs that they were compelled to take paid such



meager salaries that they couldn't afford to feed their families. Even if they had completed the alternative service, which could be up to two years, they would have received a clemency discharge which would have marked them for life. It's bad enough having a bad discharge, but what employer would hire a vet with a clemency discharge knowing that it was for AWOL.

The Earned Re-entry Program was

a sham from the start. It was designed to pick and choose which resisters would be allowed to return and it ignored the majority of veterans with less-than-honorable discharges and the countless thousands who were arrested and convicted of some 'crime' for protesting the war in Vietnam, while at the same time it was designed to punish military and draft resisters.

With the absolute failure of the clemency program, Ford and the ruling class are caught with their pants down. While they gear up for another war in their search for profits abroad, they are faced with the dismal failure of the clemency program and its implications: that people who were against the war in Vietnam are going to be against any future wars that aren't in the interests of working people here or in other countries around the world.

Even though the Clemency Board shut down the fight for a universal and unconditional amnesty continues along with the fight against future wars of US aggression.

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**P.O...**



**RANK and FILE POSTAL WORKERS DIDN'T THINK TOO MUCH OF THE NATIONAL CONTRACT. IN SOME PLACES THEY FOUGHT BY PUBLICALLY BURNING THE CONTRACT.**

Even though the contract was ratified, however the vote was obtained, the struggle is hardly over. The workers know that the bosses are going to continue to attack them, especially through "productivity" schemes like the Kokomo Plan (an automation plan to layoff more workers), increasing the number of deliveries for carriers and increasing the load of workers at the large bulk mail handling facilities by firing or forcing

workers to quit. Even though there was a no-layoff clause in the last contract, still some 100,000 workers were removed through firings and attrition.

The PWGC is putting out another newsletter to sum up the fight for a good contract and more and more rank-and-file workers are getting together to beat back the attacks on them. VVAW/WSO will continue to support the struggle of the PWGC and the postal workers it represents.

# Middle East SHAM PEACE ACCORD



Once again the American people are being treated to the ballyhoo of "lasting peace in the Middle East." Once again, Kissinger is being pictured as the indispensable superman who has brought about a just conclusion to the Sinai situation. But no amount of trumpeting can change the hard facts: the agreement calls for the continuation of Israeli troops on Egyptian territory, the US is providing Israel with increased arms used for war, not peace; and the US is planning to become more involved than ever by stationing American "technical advisors" in a so-called "neutral zone" between Egyptian and Israeli forces. Finally, there is no mention at all of the rights of the Palestinian people who have been waging struggle since 1948 to regain their lost homeland.

The arms package itself is one of the most modern arsenals ever given in one lump to another country (at least since the US attempt to prop up the puppet Thieu in South Vietnam). It calls for the supplying of approximately \$2.5 billion in military hardware in the first year alone. Included in this are the super modern F-16 and F-15 fighters, Lance and Hawk

missiles, and the medium range missile the Pershing. This missile gives the Israeli's the capability of hitting every major Arab population center or the Aswan Dam as well as deliver a nuclear warhead. Of course, Israeli leaders are willing to promise never to arm the Pershings with nuclear devices--one more diplomatic promise to be broken whenever convenient. Despite all Kissinger's talk of peace, neither he nor the government can hide the facts that these weapons are used for war, not anything else.

At the same time as the Israeli's are armed to the teeth, the agreement calls for the stationing of American "civilian" technical advisors in a buffer zone to insure the peace. Well, our memories are not so short, nor have we suffered a sudden case of amnesia about how US troops first got stationed in Indochina after the 1954 Geneva "peace" agreements. These "advisors" are only a further step in the ever-deepening involvement in the Middle East.

The increased arming of Israel and the stationing of Americans in the Sinai not only adds to the possibility of direct conflict by the US with one or another of the Arab nations, but also with the other superpower, the USSR. Despite all the talk about detente, the oil of the Middle East is just too valuable a prize for either group of thieves to surrender without a fight.

As veterans, we know what it is to fight in a rich man's war, to see our friends die for someone else's profits, and watch vets who were injured get put in butcher shops called VA hospitals instead of getting decent care. And it is precisely because we've seen first hand who benefits from rich man's wars that we're saying, "Hell No! We won't fight your wars." We have a fight alright, but that fight is right here.

# VETS PUSH: V.A. ACTS

Among the demands when the Detroit chapter of VVAW picketed the VA Regional Office on August 11th were two individual cases of vets facing VA mistreatment.

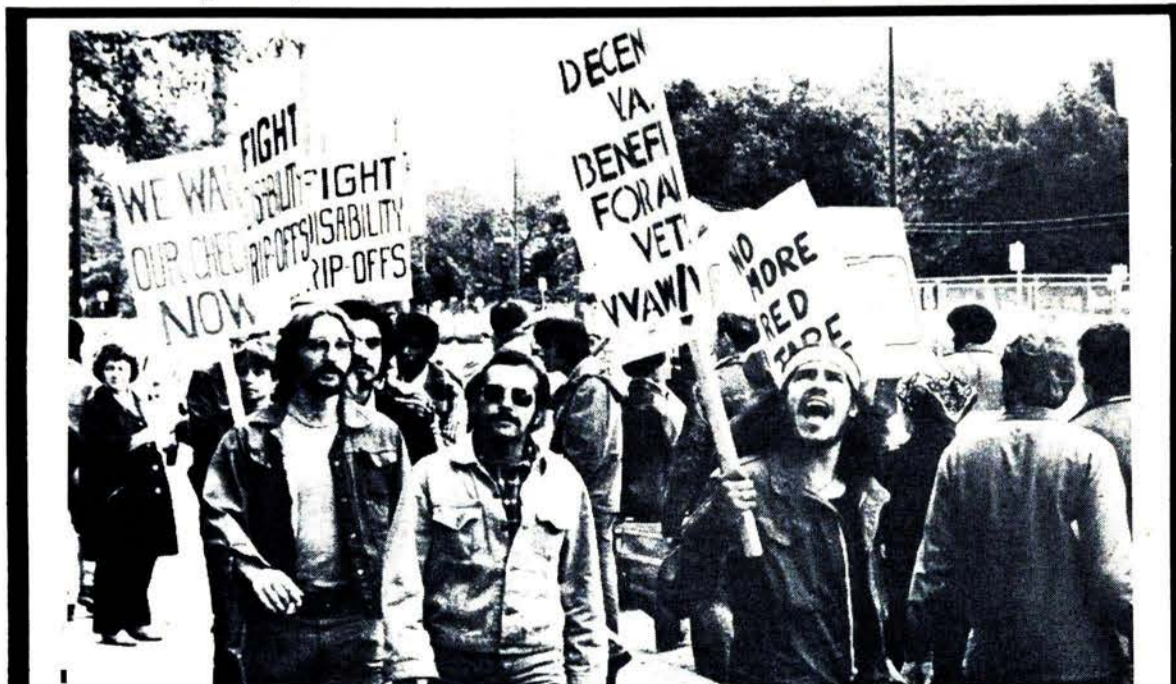
Ali, a Vietnam vet with a wife and child has been in and out of VA hospitals many times since his discharge five years ago. Due to a respiratory illness which he got in the army, he can't work. The VA, dealing with him like the VA deals with thousands of vets around the country, gives him a 10% disability, though his condition leaves him 100% disabled on the job market.

Doug is a vet going to school full time on the GI Bill; at the time of the picket line, he was just finishing his first semester, but had yet to receive any of his benefits. In order to live, he was in debt up to his ears and was facing the need to drop out of school.

During the August picket, not only these vets but several other vets who were in the VA office at the time joined in the demonstration. One vet pointed out to the rest of the picketers that it was only fitting he should be outside the VA building walking circles in a picket line--the VA has had him going around in circles for months. The director called out all the security guards, the Detroit police and US marshalls while he hid in his seventh floor office, scared to meet with the vets he--and the whole VA--is supposed to be serving. Though the director continued to cower in his office throughout the demo, the effect of the action was clear.

A VA flunky scurried out after the demonstration to get the names of these two vets. Both Ali and Doug received phone calls within two hours of the end of the action. Suddenly, the VA was working hard on their cases. Doug got his check two days after the demonstration--by special delivery--after having gotten no action at all for four months. Ali was called into the hospital and treated with kid gloves, with the kind of treatment that all vets deserve.

The VA, of course, hoped that these concessions--which are no more than the VA doing the job that the US taxpayers pay them to do--would quiet the growing movement of angry vets. No Way! These vets were two among thousands, in Detroit and across the land. These victories will help to build the movement of vets fighting the VA, the red tape, the harassment, the bad conditions, and all the rest.



Militant demo on Sept 22 at Chicago VA. Vets used bullhorn to shout their anger at the VA around disability cutbacks, late checks, decent benefits, 100% disability for Joe Blanco. When a VA hack refused the bullhorn, one vet asked: "Can't you tell your lies to more than a couple of people at a time?"

## ISOLATE OUR ENEMIES

# AGENTS EXPOSED

Two ex-members of VVAW/WSO in Milwaukee confessed to being paid informants for the FBI. Linda Imacus and Tony Tochalowski worked for the FBI since, at least, January of 1975.

Despite attempts to destroy VVAW/WSO and the growing veterans movement, the FBI and other police agencies have failed to stop us. The Milwaukee chapter has continued to build and has been making great strides forward.

When the exposure of these two police agents occurred, the chapter used the incident to further expose the role of such people as enemies of all working people. The chapter printed up a warning poster explaining what these people were doing, and how no one in the community should have anything to do with such traitors. The posters were distributed around the city and alerted people in Milwaukee to Tochalowski and Imacus should they again try to pose as 'friends' of the American people while they are working as servants of the ruling class.

In the past there has been a long line of similar riff-raff that have been run into the struggle by every imaginable civilian and military police agency. The fact is that police agencies, like the FBI, have to try to destroy groups like VVAW/WSO because the veteran's movement and the larger movement of all working people is on the rise in the US. And as we gain in numbers and strength, the rulers of this country will become more desperate in their attempts to try to stop us from getting together.

We cannot make the mistake of saying, "Well, these are just some mixed up people who don't know what they are doing. They don't really mean to hurt us." The fact is they are dangerous people. They must be exposed and treated for what they are -- our enemies. They must be exposed and utterly isolated from our everyday lives.

But no matter how many of these characters the government tries to slide into our struggle, we know that they are going to fail in their attempt to destroy us and our struggle. They can't stop us from growing. Our best defense against these tactics is our unity and determination to fight back against our oppression.

## Build Our Unity

## cont'd from pg. 1



PICKET LINE IN DETROIT TO DEMAND DECENT BENEFITS FOR ALL VETERANS

to wait another two hours for it to be filled, stop other patients and VA workers.

All of this is the result of cutbacks in staff -- one floor with 42 patients now has one nurse and one aide to take care of them. Trading the lives and health of vets to save dollars is VA policy. If they cutback people they save money. If they can make one person do two people's work, they save money. And we're the ones who pay the price.

On August 11, a demonstration organized by the VVAW/WSO chapter in Detroit, attacked these conditions; growing out of the demonstration was the Committee for Better Health Care and Decent Benefits, made up of VVAW/WSO members, hospital patients and workers. Their first meeting, held in the hospital canteen, created such panic among VA brass that all security personnel were called out, the doors to the hospital were locked, and the local police and FBI alerted. In the next several days, bulletin board notices warned people not to take leaflets and "to report anyone passing them out" to security guards. Four members of the Committee were suddenly released from the hospital.

One patient, Eugene Harvell, who was passing out a lot of leaflets was visited by Dr. Bissell, chief of medicine, accompanied by six security guards, and told he would have to leave the hospital. When he refused to leave and refused to stop organizing among patients and workers, this chief doctor/warden told him he would be restricted to his ward. The Committee immediately added the demand "Stop Solitary Confinement of Eugene Harvell--Stop All Harassment and Intimidation of Patients and Employees!"

Like thousands of vets around the country, Eugene has special reasons for fighting against the VA. A Vietnam vet, still carrying shrapnel in his face, chest, arms and legs, with one leg fused and limited use of one hand, he has never been able to work. Long periods in VA hospitals led to morphine addiction, and then the VA dumped him on the streets with a hospital-created drug habit. So, the VA threats didn't stop Eugene, nor did they

Petitions were on every floor; in one week over 200 vets and workers had signed them. Workers not only passed out leaflets, but began talking about organizing in their own ranks around the demands of vets as well as the particular ways the hospital was coming down on them. When vets and workers began to unite, all the old VA tactics of 'divide and conquer' didn't work any longer--the VA couldn't say it was "lazy nurses or aides" responsible for the bad conditions, and couldn't turn around and tell the employees that vets are all drug addicts and alcoholics. People were uniting to point their fingers at the source of the problem -- the VA itself and the system which stands behind it.

On the day of the demonstration the VA tried every dirty trick to stop it. They threatened to fire any employee on the picket line; they restricted patients to their wards. Methadone patients were told they would be kicked out of the program.

But none of this harassment and threatening could stop people from joining the picket line. One employee showed up saying that he had to protest the rotten conditions even if he got fired. Many patients joined in -- one carrying his intravenous stand. There were patients in wheelchairs, and the family of one vet who had died in the hospital. One patient yelled for us to come up to his ward since they wouldn't let him come down.

The chants on the picket line and the raps at the rally pointed toward the cause of the problems and what people are doing about them -- "VA Bosses Pass the Word, We're here to Fight and We're going to be heard," and "Patients and Workers Unite--Organize to Fight". As one speaker put it, "We're going to keep fighting until we get to the cause of the rotten conditions in the hospital" -- the VA big shots and the millionaire class behind them who call the shots. The same speaker pointed out that this class has the whole working class against it, not just vets alone.

# LETTERS

THE VETERAN WELCOMES LETTERS, COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS. PLEASE WRITE TO US. ALSO IF YOU HAVE ANY POETRY, DRAWINGS OR STORIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THIS PAPER SEND THEM ALONG.

Dear Friends,

It was with great pleasure that we received your letter dated April 28. But we regretted that it arrived here later than May 17, the Armed Forces Day, so we could not send you even a cable-message in time to support your activities on that day.

By the way, we also would like to take this opportunity to express our full solidarity with and deep sympathy for your hard struggle against oppression, in democracy and wretched working and living conditions caused by the imperialist military in the United States.

We, Vietnamese people who have just freed ourselves from the French, and then US oppression and domination, more than anyone else, profoundly sympathize with and highly appreciate your courageous struggle for justice, democracy and social progress. We wish you every success in your activities and we firmly believe that the final victory will certainly be yours. On our part, we always are at your side and fully support your just

cause.

Dear Friends, in this historic time of great victories, we would like to let you know that we shall never forget the precious political support or the progressive American organizations and people including your organization to our sacred fight for national salvation and are always grateful for it. We think that our victory is also yours.

Please, with our warm feelings to all members in VVAW/WSO.

With you all in struggle,  
Vo thi The  
General Executive Member of  
VietNam Women's Union

(The following is an excerpt from a letter from a prisoner at the Florida State Correctional Institution in Lowell, Florida.)

"... The efforts toward advising vets of our rights that I have witnessed in the last three months was when a representative of a correspondence training school presented his sales pitch to inmates and agreed to file VA applications for them. Even then, he would only speak to vets with Honorable Discharges. The institution education department provides absolutely no information or assistance concerning GI Bill eligibility or qualification. Like I said before, we remain dependent on usually unanswered correspondence to the VA."

ey" when we jam them. But the response of students and teachers alike has been to unite and fight back against all cuts.

One good example of this had been the struggle in the city college system in Chicago. There, some 1400 teachers went out on strike, affecting over 95,000 students, for a 16% pay increase, no increase in class size (currently pegged at a maximum of 29 students for day classes and 35 for night classes), and no firings or layoffs of teachers. The administrators of the city college system had been trying to fire 80-100 teachers, put them on a semester rather than an annual or two-year contract basis and increase class size to 40 students for day classes and 44 for night classes.

Students from a number of the city colleges in Chicago joined to form the Committee To Fight For A Decent Education to take up the struggle for a decent education and support the teachers' strike. At one point in the struggle, members of the Committee marched into the City College Board meeting to jam the administrators. When these bureaucrats ran out of their meeting 2 minutes later, the students then marched into the office of the head of the city colleges to show support for the teachers' strike and demand no cuts in education. Through actions such as this, the stu-

VVAW/WSO:

I am a VA employee and I agree with you thoroughly in your championing the cause of the Vietnam-era Vet. There are a few exceptions, but in general the VA is a rigid, unresponsive, pious, bureaucracy staffed by over-the-hill, got-it-made types. I'm proud to contribute to VVAW/WSO - thanks for one vet organization that really concerns itself with vets, not political backscratching, socializing and trite do-gooder services. I hope you will be successful in maintaining your organization now that the war is finally over -- good luck!

Sincerely,  
P.E.

Dear P.E.,

Thanks for your letter and contribution. There is one point that we disagree with in your letter though. While there are some over-the-hill types staffing the VA hospitals, we know that the majority of VA workers are actually interested in helping vets out. Unfortunately the VA overworks, underpays and harasses them much in the same way it mistreats the vets.

Solidarity,  
The Veteran



CONT. FROM P. 6

## EDUCATION

lone has slashed the state budget for education by \$52 million this year.

All of this stands in direct conflict with the fact that we need MORE education of decent quality, not less. We all want to do something with our lives, to have a decent future for us and our families. For this, we need education. While we will still have to compete for the few available jobs, an education is a prerequisite for getting many good jobs. It's one way of improving the quality of our lives. But to get an education for us and our families, just like anything else under this system, we have to fight to get it and then fight like hell to keep it. That's why these attacks on education are being met by students, parents and teachers throughout the country. The ruling class and their government spokesmen throw up their hands whimpering, "But we just don't have the mon-

dents gave invaluable support to the teachers. In the face of the growing unity and militance of the strike, the college board finally was forced to cave in to most of the teachers' demands.

With millions of other people, vets have a big stake in the fight for a decent education. Our children are directly affected by the attacks and cutbacks in the educational system in the US. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of vets are enrolled in GED schools, city colleges, junior colleges, trade schools--all of which feel the crunch of education cutbacks even before other schools. Rising tuition costs and cutbacks in programs and services hit us hard. At one school in Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Area Technical College, tuition was recently almost doubled. Initially, the school directors had tried to triple the tuition payments, but had to back down.

A decent education, and all the potential that education can open up for all of us, is a right as well as a need for all. A good education can't become a privilege of only the wealthy as it once was. Veterans who are parents or students join with other parents and students to support the fight of teachers to improve conditions in schools to make a better education possible. And we join with millions of Americans to fight for a decent education for all.



# OFF V.A. DRUGS

is worse. It's more severe, painful and prolonged. Attempted too rapidly, it can be fatal. What methadone is, in reality, is a way for the VA and the government to control totally the vets on the program. Play ball with the VA or it's cold turkey and you're off the program and out on your ass.

During the summer, a fierce struggle erupted among the 269 patients at the Drug Dependency Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit in the Brooklyn VA Hospital. Fed up with the miserable conditions and treatment, vets on the drug treatment program began organizing themselves to do something about changing the situation. Forming a group called Vet-Pac, the patients took up the struggle to help fellow vets cure themselves and fight against the mistreatment and indifference from the bureaucrats running the VA program.

Members of Vet-Pac were either on the VA's drug maintenance program or had recently gotten off it. They saw the goals of their struggle as (1) helping vets on the drug program get off ALL drugs--methadone as well as heroin, and (2) having some control over the drug program being administered while they were in the VA. The fact is that millions of us were forced into a nightmare situation like Vietnam--or just the bone-numbing misery of life in the military--which led many of us to try to escape into the world of dope. When the Brass in Nam began freaking out about GI resistance, they aided the process by having the CIA supply us with mountains of powerful Laotian heroin. A GI numbed out on dope was a hell of a lot safer than a mad GI with a loaded M-16 in his hand, or so the Brass figured.

Well, now there are between 60 and 200 thousand vets back in the US with a drug addiction problem directly resulting from military service. At first, VA refused to deal with the problem at all. Then when public pressure became too much to ignore, the VA honchos dished up the methadone maintenance program which is still in effect. Rather than cure drug addiction, the VA's solution was to take us off one drug and substitute another--methadone. Of course methadone ain't no cure at all. It's MORE addictive than heroin! While withdrawal from heroin isn't a pretty experience, withdrawal from methadone

It was these conditions that the vets in Vet-Pac began to fight. As one Vet-Pac member put it, vets want an alternative "which will get a man off drugs without using drugs to do it." Moreover, the vets were fed-up with the threats and harassment they got while on the program. Like every other part of the VA system, the attitude from the administrators was that the hospital belonged to them, that vets/patients are only a bother--the idea that the VA is only there in order to serve the needs of veterans has never gotten through to them.

For the slightest "infraction" of VA rules patients were threatened with being kicked out of the program. Patient's dosages were regularly held up as "punishment," and Mickey Mouse violations of hospital rules led to threats of removing recreation room "privileges." VA security guards regularly harassed patients and tried to order them around like they were 1st week recruits in basic training. Fights between patients and the VA goons were regular. Even more intolerable, however, was the lousy medical treatment. In one 5-week period this summer, 4 patients died from VA administered overdoses. Over the past 2 years, 20 patients died from ODs.

When it began, Vet-Pac found widespread support among drug patients. Initial victories came quickly--such as a patient self-policing policy where the patients took care of their own problems and kept VA guards the hell out. The influence Vet-Pac began to gain with vets utterly freaked out the VA bureaucrats. In retaliation they ordered Vet-Pac out of the hospital, disbanded the self-policing policy, and stepped up harassment of patients.

In response to these attacks, Vet-Pac organized a demonstration on June 13th which members of VVAW attended. Some 75 people demonstrated and picketed at the hospital in a highly spirited demo that lasted for 7 hours. Some of the patients came in uniform and spoke about the bull-

shit treatment they'd gotten from the service and were now getting again from the VA. In memory of the dead patients at the hospital, one vet in a Navy uniform took a bullhorn and talked about how VA neglect and indifference had killed them. The demonstrators cheered him as he spoke. A VVAW member was also cheered by the vets as he spoke on the bullhorn about how lousy this whole system is, how vets were first used as cannon fodder to fight a rich man's war and were now getting royally screwed over by the VA. Vet-Pac members and other patients saw that their fight with the VA drug program was the same fight vets all over the country have with late checks, disability cutbacks, VA red tape and harassment. A number of Brooklyn vets later joined VVAW in the fight around Jose Rosario's late GI Bill checks (see story on p. 3) on June 19th. Their participation made that action stronger and more spirited by showing the unity of vets involved in different struggles against the VA.

On June 27 Vet-Pac held another action again attended by about 75 people. Like the first, it was spirited and a real success. Primary demands again centered around firing key VA administrators responsible for the shit coming down there and demands like "We Don't Want No VA Jive, Drug-Free Programs to Survive," "VA says Cutback, Vets say Fightback," and "Vets Say Nope to VA Dope."

After that action, the VA administrators again panicked and threw individual leaders of Vet-Pac out of the hospital, barring them for good. One Vet-Pac leader still on the program was threatened with a forced 21-day detox if he didn't shape up (since normal detox time would be 6 months, this was clearly a threat to kill him).

At this time, the struggle at the Brooklyn VA has suffered a temporary setback. Vet-Pac was rooted out of the hospital, at least for now. Leaders of the struggle against the VA failed to unite with enough patients, particularly through the rest of the hospital, and with VA workers and the community. As a result, the VA hacks were able to isolate Vet-Pac leaders, throw them out of the hospital, and stifle the organization. But in one form or another resistance continues, as it will continue to grow against the repression of the VA brass. The same lousy conditions and harassment continue at the hospital, and vets are still determined to fight it. Next time around we will have learned from our mistakes and use this knowledge to wage even more effective struggle in the future.