



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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NOV/DEC 1976

## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN BUILDS

# FREE ASHBY LEACH

## NEW GI BILL EQUALS NEW ATTACK

On November 11, as veterans across the country readied for another round of "traditional" veterans day celebrations, or demonstrations in opposition to these so-called "memorials" to vets, Congress, working clearly in the interest of the rich who run this country made public another serious blow to the G I Bill!

Under the guise of a "new and improved" system of benefits, people who enlist in the military after December 31 of this year will no longer receive the "G I Bill" as we know it. In its place there will be a new "contribution" program that will deny veterans thousands of dollars received under the previous Vietnam-era Bill and that will place new restrictions upon the users, making it impossible for many to receive any type of decent education at all.

The new program, effective December 31, says that

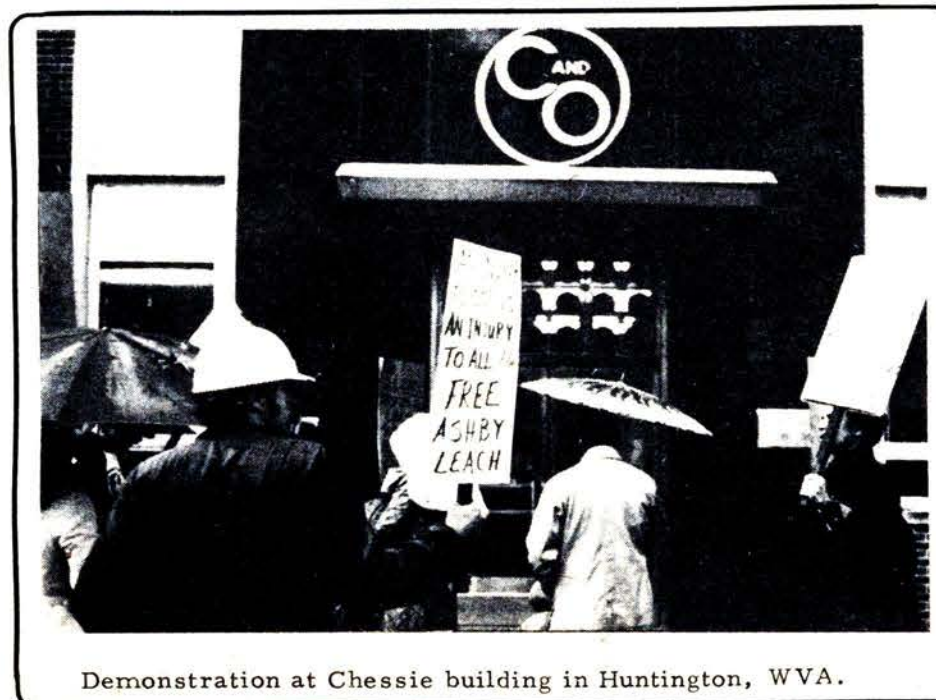
those who join after that date gain their benefits by contributing from \$50 to \$75 a month to the VA, up to a limit of \$2,700 over their military time. The government will match the contribution with \$2 for each \$1 contributed. A person on the plan may quit the program at the end of any 12 month period. Those who quit get their money back "but in most cases lose their rights to government benefits." The plan is a five year experiment founded by the VA. Afterwards, recommendations for continuations will be made, subject to con-

gressional approval, with spending under the Defense Department.

VVAW's position on this G I Bill cutoff and alternate plan is that it is an out and out ripoff and the most severe attack on the G I Bill to date. The factors with which we determine this are clear.

Vets will be screwed out of thousands of dollars under this plan. Single veterans are currently receiving \$292 a month, which reads out to \$14,140 if all 45 months of the current G I Bill are utilized.

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Demonstration at Chessie building in Huntington, WVA.

Around the country, VVAW chapters are taking up the campaign to Free Ashby Leach. In Norfolk, Virginia, there have been two marches to Chessie facilities in order to leaflet and talk with Chessie employees. In Veteran's Day marches and demonstrations from Philadelphia to San Francisco, there were banners demanding "Free Ashby Leach," and speeches which pointed out how Ashby is an example both of how veterans are used once by the rich to fight their wars and then thrown away once the use has been sucked out of them, and of how vets refuse to take this treatment lying down. Petitions demanding that Leach be freed, that Chessie honor its promises to veterans, and that the GI Bill be extended and expanded are being signed in cities across the nation. And chapters and individuals are raising funds to pay Ashby's bond and help to finance his legal defense.

*"While I was in the 'Nam picking up the bodies of my slain and mutilated countrymen, the Chessie system was picking up the profits from a stimulated economy. Then when I and the other survivors of that bloody tragedy in Vietnam ask for the benefits we are entitled to under the GI Bill, the Chessie System's corporate policy makers say no."*

After a five-year-long struggle to get his veteran's benefits from the Chessie system (a corporate conglomerate which took over the old Chesapeake and Ohio, and the Baltimore and Ohio railroads), Ashby Leach took direct action on August 26th of this year by going to Chessie headquarters in the Terminal Tower building in Cleveland, Ohio, seizing one of the offices and holding 13 hostages (including one Chessie vice-president) for 9 hours. In the bright light of national media, the Chessie system agreed to Ashby's demands--that Chessie extend all benefits of the GI Bill to its vets and that past employees who have been cheated of these benefits be reimbursed. Once these promises were made, Ashby surrendered-

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## Elections Don't Change a Thing

# SAME CLASS RULES BEHIND NEW SMILE

Finally, the election's over and we've got a winner. Jimmy Carter says he's got a "mandate" based on the 51% of the 53% of eligible voters who cast ballots for him (which means that 73% of the eligible voters didn't vote for Carter). And immediately after the election was over, Carter left for St. Simon, a resort island off the coast of Georgia; his vice-president elect, Walter Mondale, was vacationing in the

Virgin Islands. And the defeated President was out hob-nobbing with his rich cronies in Palm Springs. Meanwhile, the electors, the millions of working people in this country, went on with their back-breaking jobs in unsafe factories, or back to the unemployment lines, going home at night to decaying, crime-filled neighborhoods to hear the new president declare how we have reached "national unity," how the "will of the peo-

ple" has elected him our new President.

Lots of people were skeptical about these elections. People have been through the Vietnam War, through Watergate, through a continuing economic disaster, and have heard all the thousands of flowery promises that politicians will pronounce to get themselves elected. There's not a whole lot of faith left in politicians or their

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# ASHBY LEACH

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ed; outside the Terminal Tower a crowd of thousands had gathered, many raising clenched fists and cheering. Ashby Leach had made a statement by his actions that not just vets but everyone else who's been pushed around and messed over by the system could take as their own.

*"The corporate policy makers of the Chessie system deplore violence, and most people do, myself included. But they (the railroad policy makers) will use their lawyers, lobbyists, political power, and financial power to squash you and beat you legally when you know you're right. Sometimes a person must fight back."*

As soon as Ashby Leach was arrested, however, Chessie immediately reneged on all its promises. Working hand in hand with the State of Ohio, Chessie made sure that Ashby was arrested, charged with 16 felonies (13 kidnapping charges) and that bond was set at an astronomical \$450,000. To avoid further exposure of the way they had been treating vets, Chessie is now working with the state again in trying to have Ashby declared "incompetent" or "insane," and prevent his case from coming to trial.

Ashby Leach has hurt no one. He is certainly angry, and justifiably so; he's not crazy, but is a proud man determined not to be shoved around by the big corporations like Chessie. His demands are just. And that's what Chessie and their hired politicians and courts can't stand; that their filthy lies and promises have been exposed. What happened to Ashby Leach, the abuse he got from Chessie and the whole system, is typical of what's happening to vets as the GI Bill comes under attack and thousands of vets are denied their benefits one way or another.

*"In 1971 when they fired me after they told me that I could have a leave of absence to go to school on the GI Bill. I was mad and I was writing letters and protesting stuff. I wrote Sen Vance Hartke just practically begging him to do something about this and he didn't even answer my letters even as he is all the time getting up in Congress saying how important it is to give the railroads more money, how they are the backbone of the nation and economy, sending nerve gas across Indiana on the railroads, giving his daughter a job with the railroads—I didn't know nothing about this stuff about politics, campaigning, and stuff, but after running into this fight with Chessie I've got a much better perspective on what's going on in this country today because it's not just Chessie. . . ."*

And this is exactly why the ruling class has come down so heavy on Ashby; they want to turn his fighting example of resistance into a negative exam-



ple, to say that if you stand up against the system, you'll be crushed; if you speak up for your rights, you'll be declared "crazy." Ashby Leach isn't crazy and he isn't crushed. A movement is growing that will further expose the abuses of this system against veterans, build on the fighting spirit that Ashby Leach showed in Chessie headquarters, and fight like hell to get him out of jail--and keep him out. (For further information about the long struggle of Ashby Leach against the Chessie system, see the October issue of The Veteran.)

The Chessie system, its treatment of vets and the lies that are behind that is hanging out all over the place. And, like capitalists everywhere, they have to try to cover up their rotten act. The most recent tactics have been twofold: since they found that they couldn't just stick Ashby away in the Cuyahoga County jail and wish him to disappear, they are trying to help the courts prove that he is a "schizoid paranoid," hoping that if they can "prove" that they can see him put away in an asylum for the criminally insane and that people will forget about Ashby and his fight.

Their second tactic is to counterattack; in their publication "Chessie News" (subtitled "For the Whole Family") the front two pages are devoted to an article entitled "Disgruntled Ex-Apprentice Quit Job With Another Railroad Before Harassing Chessie Hostages." And the next three pages are devoted to interviews with Chessie's "happy vets," all of whom, according to the publication, are delighted with their jobs and with the way Chessie is treating its veterans. As icing on the cake, Chessie arranged with the West Virginia VFW, long a faithful parrot of the ideas and politics of the ruling class, to give Chessie an award for its exceptional record in hiring vets.

Some of what the Chessie system says in its publication is distorted; some is simple lies. They quote Ashby Leach's wife as saying that "He believes he is doing it for all the other Vietnam veterans." Chessie

comments, "Although Leach has claimed that his 'campaign' was on behalf of his fellow veterans, there is no evidence that he has ever spoken for anyone other than himself." And how about the 2000 people who supported him outside the Terminal Tower? And what about vets all over the country who feel the effects of the economic crisis as the government tries to push the burden on us with cuts in the GI Bill, wretched VA healthcare, no jobs. The "happy and contented vets" who love the Chessie system? Well, maybe some of them do. But it's also true that the 13 hostages originally said they had been treated well; only after the Chessie officers had talked with them (no doubt pointing out who had the power to fire them) did a couple of them discover that they had been mistreated by Ashby Leach.

The media has also been used by Chessie; Cleveland papers have been consistently attempting to portray Ashby as crazy. The fact that the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the largest paper in the city, is owned by Cyrus Eaton, Chairman of the Board Emeritus of Chessie is never mentioned, of course.

*"It's not our fault (vets) that the war was such a bloody bummer. It's not our fault. And if people want to take it out on somebody. . . well then they should take it out on those who profited from the conflict and that was corporations like Eaton and . . . that was those who had political power--not big dummies like me and the other millions of people who went into the military and did what they were supposed to do."*

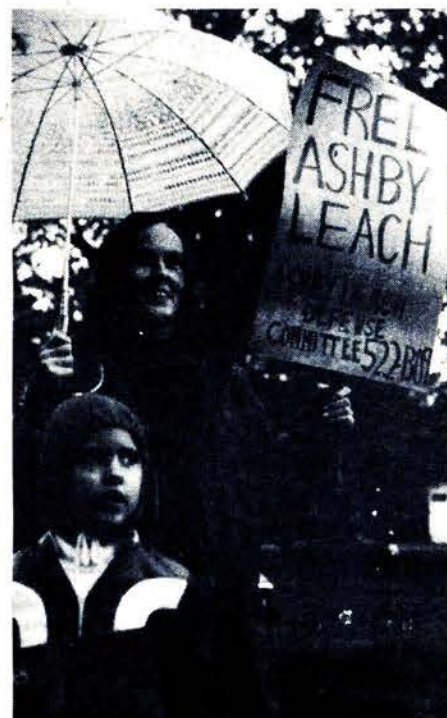
And the courts, which have always responded when their strings are pulled by the rich and powerful, appointed as attorney a corporate lawyer with offices in the Terminal Tower.

After being "counselled" by the court-appointed attorney to take any "deal" that the prosecution might offer, Ashby Leach during a pre-trial hearing on November 17th, requested his own attorney. Since there was no way to deny this request, a new attorney was appointed and immediately asked for reduction in the ridiculously high \$450,000 bond. And found that the court-appointed attorney had never bothered to make that

simple legal request, but was instead carrying out the desires of the Chessie system to make sure that Ashby did not get out on bond. As a result of the new attorney's request, bond was reduced from \$450,000 to \$100,000; working through a bondsman, it is now possible for Ashby Leach to be out of jail pending trial for \$5000.

The immediate tasks facing VVAW are to raise the money for bond so Ashby can be out of jail, to continue to build nationwide support for his defense, and to raise the money needed to pay for his legal defense. Already the Milwaukee chapter of VVAW is asking people who sign the Ashby Leach petition to contribute a dollar toward his bond, and other chapters of VVAW will be doing similar fund-raising. Contributions can be mailed to the Ashby Leach Defense Committee, PO Box 09100, Cleveland, Ohio 44109. To get copies of the petition or for more information on how you can help to build the defense, contact the Defense Committee, the VVAW National Office, or the local VVAW chapter.

ON THANKSGIVING DAY ASHBY LEACH WAS FREED FROM THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY JAIL WHEN HIS FAMILY RAISED THE \$5000 FOR HIS BOND. WHILE THIS IS A GREAT BEGINNING, MORE FUNDS ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED TO BUILD ASHBY'S DEFENSE.

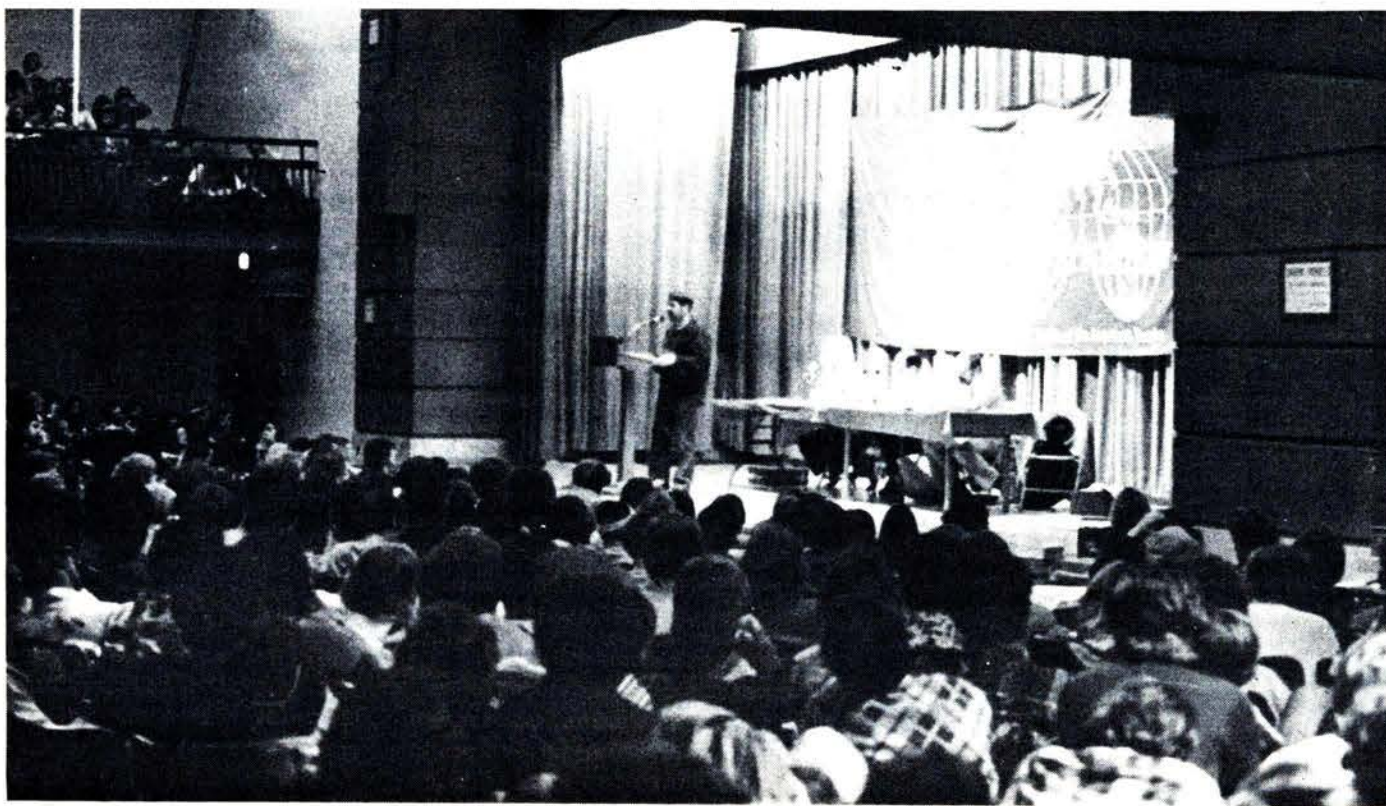


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**SHARP DEBATE, GROWING UNDERSTANDING**

# CONFERENCE ON WORLD SITUATION DRAWS 2,000



Bob Avakian speaking to huge crowd during evening debate at Conference.

On November 20th, over 2200 people attended a day long conference in New York City on the International Situation, War, Revolution, and the International tasks of the American people. Called for and sponsored by a wide range of prominent individuals and political organizations, including VVAW, the conference met to clarify the issues named in the theme of the conference and to openly view the major political trends in the US today, in light of the current world situation.

The conference was called as an important step to broaden and sharpen the debate on the International situation, to put the different views and ideas out squarely and clearly. The various forces that attended see the world today in great turmoil with the contradictions and struggles sharpening on all continents, in all countries.

Major questions, which can mean life or death for millions of people were addressed. Where does the threat of war come from? What is the role of the US and the USSR? Of China? Of Cuba? And what are the duties and tasks of the American people in the international struggle against imperialism and oppression?

These questions, how they relate to the American people, how they relate to the world's

people, particularly in various geographical areas, were discussed in a realistic way as they apply to our everyday lives. Based on the experience of the great movement that we, the American people, built against the war in Vietnam, many of these same forces who stood up and fought the US ruling class in the 1960's and early 70's came together, putting forward different analyses, different answers, different directions for our actions. The conference was a tremendous event that brought out these differences and clarified the different trends in the US and world today, pointing the way forward in our work. There were four predominant political lines that ran throughout the speeches, workshops and debates of the conference. It was those major positions and the raging debate around them that brought life and enthusiasm to the entire conference.

To an overflow crowd, many of whom had to have the sound piped in since they could not get into the main room, three main speakers during the morning session of the conference put forward three of the main positions concerning the situation in the world today. And these main positions, with all kinds of variation, flowed through each of the workshops during the afternoon, and were present again

during the debate in the evening.

One morning speaker, Egbal Ahmad, began by saying that he wasn't committed to any "position" on the world situation. He went on with a speech that made it clear that he saw the United States, despite its being weakened by its defeat in Indochina was the main danger to the people of the world today; the Soviet Union, he said, while it is a rising power, still has many progressive aspects to its positions. The US and the Soviet Union, he said, are in a struggle for the "status quo to change through detente." War, he seemed to say, is a planned policy of a bunch of evil men who run the country--as if a new group of leaders could somehow prevent another war if just they really wanted to avoid it.

Unfortunately, the world isn't that simple. Imperialism, such as that which the US ruling class fosters or which their counterparts in the Soviet Union follow, is not a matter of "policy"--instead, there are laws which dictate how imperialism develops and survives. Primary among these laws is the one which says that imperialists must "expand or die"--they must keep growing, sucking more and more profits out of their workers and exploit more and more workers around the world, or else they will col-

lapse. And when there are two imperialist powers, both trying to grab all the resources and workers in the world, there is contention. And that contention will inevitably lead to war.

The reason behind this, which Mr Ahmad refused to recognize, is that the Soviet Union, once a socialist country, has, since 1954, been moving more and more into capitalism. Like the US, there is now a ruling class in the Soviet Union--it's not for nothing that Brezhnev gets expensive foreign cars as "gifts" from rulers of other capitalist countries, or that the Soviet rulers run off to their "dachas" (resort estates) just like Jimmy Carter or Gerald Ford.

In the afternoon workshops the same political position came out again and again. In the workshop on Angola, for instance, this political position said that the Soviet Union was right in there supporting liberation struggle of the Angolan people, never pointing out that the Soviet Union was, like the US, trying to gain as much of a political and economic foothold as possible and using Cuban troops to secure their position.

Another political position was proclaimed at the morning session, and throughout the conference, by William Hinton, one-time chairperson of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association. Although covered over by all kinds of subtleties and qualifications, Hinton's position seemed to be just the reverse of the first position described--that, although the US was a dangerous imperialist power, and although it was still the primary enemy of the people in the US, worldwide the Soviet Union, because it is the rising imperialist power, is the main danger today and the main source from which will arise the next world war.

In the real world what this position comes down to is to side with the rulers of the US against the ruling class of the Soviet Union. When a new war comes, the American people should rally to the banner of the

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# '76 AUTO Contracts- A Time to FIGHT

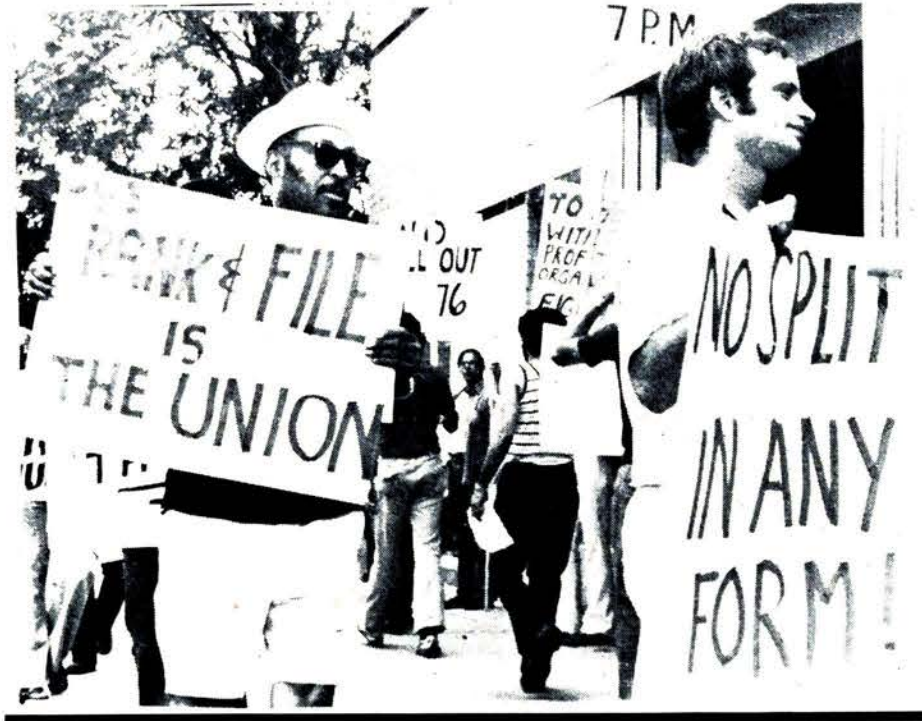
From the beginning of the September Ford Motor Co. strike and continuing through the Chrysler and GM battles of October and November, rank and file autoworkers have put up a stiff fight not to have sell-out contracts pushed down their throats.

After a strike of 4 weeks, United Auto Workers (UAW) top officials signed a contract with the Ford Motor Company that stunk. The shorter work week is a shuck, 13 more days off spread over three years, but five less paid days at Christmas vacation over the life of the contract. The highly advertised "jobs for the unemployed," supposedly created by some extra days off, will go up in smoke as the contract dumps certain restrictions on forced overtime. At the same time, cost of living (COLA) money is taken from active workers' paychecks to give \$600 to retirees, who didn't even end up with COLA on their pensions. The wage increase is pitiful, 3% a year with only 11 cents new money and more part-timers, less union rights for probationaries.

Ford workers, who struck over real grievances like wages, speed-up, forced overtime and others, nearly rejected the contract. A 40% "No" vote by production workers was one of the largest rejection votes in UAW history--and 11 plants voted it down altogether, staying out over local issues. This vote margin was even tighter among skilled trades (and in some places the vote was stolen outright as more "yes" votes were recorded than even voted). In some locals, workers walked out in disgust as the UAW International tried to whitewash the sellout and some UAW rank and file stood in the aisles of union meetings ripping up their copies of the proposed agreement.

From the beginning of the struggle, the UAW top leadership did its best to disorganize and demoralize the rank and file, to confuse the issues of the strike and to set workers up for the kill. This was the only way they could accomplish the sellouts.

But there were also some big victories in the strike. Through the course of their



struggle Ford workers came to understand much more clearly that they're up against a two-headed monster--not only the company, but also a handful of traitors heading up their union. Unity, especially between skilled and production, and between Black and white grew, and the rank and file became more organized.

Much of this was due to the efforts of Auto Workers United to Fight in '76 (AWUF), a rank and file group working within the UAW. Beginning last February, the group worked to expose how UAW president Woodcock's talk about shorter work weeks was an attempt to sidetrack the rank and file and avoid real issues. Before the strike AWUF advanced a set of contract demands that did deal with real needs of auto workers around the contract, encouraging workers to fight for those demands and build organization to do it. AWUF used leaflets, demonstrations, and press conferences to put a harsh light on the maneuvers of the UAW negotiators, exposing the ugly facts about the contract terms even before the final touches were put on it.

Most importantly, AWUF took on the problem of a phony strike. When the Ford workers went out, the UAW leadership made no attempt to shut Ford down tight, allowing Canadian Ford plants to continue production, not setting up 24 hour pickets, and allowing outside contractors, foremen and salaried

personnel into the plants to work. AWUF organized a number of different actions and joined in others to build the strike. They organized pickets that no one dared cross, helped shut down a Ford complex the UAW International had ordered to continue working. AWUF organized the rank and file around the whole battle around contracts.

AWUF helped to focus the anger of thousands of auto workers. During its nine month existence, it has grown from a couple of chapters in the Detroit area to 22 chapters nationwide today.

The sellout nature of the union leadership, and the lengths they were willing to go in order to get over was seen at Chrysler. Workers there were kept in the dark about the progress of their negotiations until a half-hour before the strike deadline. They had been told in almost every plant that if either the national or the local contract was not settled by the deadline, the plant would go on strike. But the top union officials changed their tune just before the strike deadline and told everybody to stay on the job even though the majority of local contracts were not settled and the national agreement was not fully worked out. When, on November 5, the Chrysler workers were handed the terms of the sellout agreement, patterned after the Ford contract, 30,000 workers wildcatted. This was the largest wildcat in

the history of the auto industry. UAW officials were so afraid of a "No" vote they held the ratification vote in the plants, hoping for a larger "yes" turnout. Even then, 33% of production workers and 39% of skilled trades voted "no."

The UAW officials stalled around the GM contract battle. The strike deadline was set for Thursday, November 18 at 5PM. But when the deadline came around, instead of a company-wide shutdown, the international called for a "mini-strike," closing only sixteen of GM's 119 plants. The idea was to shutdown sixteen different plants for four days (Friday through Monday) until a settlement was reached. The initial 16 plants hit were not the ones that really damaged GM production but those which the UAW leadership felt were most firmly in the grip of their chosen hacks. But the strike itself only lasted some 13 hours, when a settlement was announced following the lines of the Ford agreement. Included in this sellout is an exchange of letters from the union and GM, saying that GM will neither "discourage nor encourage" the union's effort to organize its plants in the South, and on the union's part, that they won't badmouth GM "as an organization nor its representatives as individuals." The ratification vote for this contract is set for December 6th.

The gains made so far in rank and file organization and understanding in the course of these '76 auto contract battles have significance for the entire working class. The struggle shows it's possible to fight the two-headed company/union-traitor monster, even when one part is as entrenched and centralized as the top UAW officials, and make headway. Of course, the capitalists are not going to settle in and wait for this consolidation to take place. Already AWUF is under sharp attack in some areas, hit by firings, goon tactics and red-baiting. But the auto workers' struggle is growing and with a leadership that unites all who can be united against the real enemies of the workers, these difficulties, too, will be overcome.



# BAY AREA VVAW HITS NAVY ANIV.



Bay Area VVAW members building GI Bill Campaign

On October 9-11, the US Navy held its 200th Birthday Open House in San Francisco at Pier 23, with 10 warships, drill teams, displays and a lot of free literature about how great it is to join the navy. The Bay Area Chapter of VVAW saw this whole display as a real attack, especially on youth and unemployed workers who are bombarded daily in the high schools and unemployment offices with slick "The Navy-- Not Just a Job... An Adventure" pitches from recruiters. VVAW decided to go and tell people exactly what kind of adventure they're talking about--about how a lot of VVAW members went in to get job training or experience or to earn a few bucks since there weren't any jobs in civilian life, and how we ended up in Vietnam fighting a war for the rich. The chapter wrote up a leaflet and went to Pier 23.

There were busloads of high school students from all

over Northern California and a lot of sightseers. The vets got into a lot of good raps with people telling them why we say we won't fight another rich man's war--how the rich use the working class to fight for them and then we come home and find the "national honor" they talk about (which many didn't fall for in the first place) is really unemployment lines and misery for millions of working people under this rich man's system. And during all of this, the rich get richer.

On the following week, once again exposing the recruiter's lies, 12 VVAW members held a small but militant picket line in front of the San Francisco VA, putting them on notice that vets aren't going to stand for all the jive red tape, cutbacks, cutoffs, attendance rules etc that they're using to get vets off the GI Bill. There was good response from VA workers (many of whom are vets themselves) and vets going in to deal with some kind of VA related hassle.

## VA Approved Dumping Ground

# Disabled Vets Housed in Filth

Eighteen disabled veterans, ranging in age from 40-60, were found living in a rundown, filthy hotel that St Louis police admit is a major point for narcotics distribution (\$2,000 per day) in that city. The vets are living there with Veterans Administration (VA) knowledge and approval.

The vets, unable to care for themselves and for the most part unaware of their situation, live amid roaches, filthy bathrooms, trash on the floors, crumbling walls and ceilings and general conditions that should mark the building for condemnation. In the past 6 months there have been 50 narcotics-related arrests, a murder, and a recent raid that netted 3,000 pills of various types and 50 packets of heroin.

When questioned, the VA's response was even more disgusting. "You and I wouldn't want to live there," said Eugene Heitman, chief of Field Investigations Service for the VA, "but the men are comfortable." "You'd be surprised," he further stated, "but this is the kind of life that suits them." Heitman went on to say that when shocking conditions are found in vets' housing, efforts are made to move the disabled vets. "But I wouldn't call the hotel shocking," he said.

Thomas H. Simmons, Chief of Social Works at the VA hospitals in St Louis said that he is aware of the conditions at the hotel on Natural Bridge Avenue and that the VA isn't referring vets there anymore. As for the vets currently living there, Simmons said, "It's an unfortunate situation. I feel bad about it. We're carefully looking into it." Simmons further admitted that social workers in his office approved the hotel and had recommended it to the legal guardians of the vets. Simmons then passed the buck of bettering lives of vets on to the shoulders of their legal guardians.

This is where an elected official, St Louis Public Administrator Charles Deeba enters the picture. One of the official

guardians for the vets, the "good public servant" Deeba administers heirless property and sometimes serves as a guardian for mental incompetents. Eight of the vets in the hotel never see their disability or pension checks. The checks go to Deeba who pays the men's room and board. The money left over is put into an interest-bearing account under Deeba's name.

Deeba was not available for comments, but had his secretary give his "explanation." She said that no effort has been made to move the men, "because there have been no complaints. They can't get into nursing homes. There's no place to take them. They drink and they're not clean."

Further investigation will no doubt show that Deeba has a comfortable, not to mention profitable, arrangement with the hotel owners.

VVAW's position is clear on this situation. We'd like the heads of Heitman, Simmons, Deeba and their associates--all those scum-sucking SOB's who profit from the misery of vets in St Louis.

But it doesn't stop there. These small time punks are just one local example of thousands like them around the country sheltered by the VA and the state and city governments, draining the blood out of veterans of all eras.

We're not helpless and we won't remain silent about this or any other outrage against us. We point the blame at the VA and at the rich who control it and every other part of the government. We say loud and clear that our enemy is among us, the ruling class who sent us off to fight their wars and then dump us out with the morning garbage when they're through with us.

We certainly would like to be able to "administer" to these creeps like Heitman, Simmons and Deeba ourselves; revenge would be sweet. But in the end the only real solution to this and the other rotten conditions imposed on us is when the masses of people bring down this whole rotten system that breeds rats like these guys.



## THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

25¢

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## Mayaguez Fraud Exposed

# EXCUSE FOR AGGRESSION

On October 5, the General Accounting Office (GAO), a congressional agency which does investigations into the functioning of the executive branch, released a secret report which exposes the carefully fabricated lies about the Mayaguez incident of May 12, 1975.

The Mayaguez was the name of a US container ship. Just after the US had been run out of Vietnam and Cambodia, the ship was seized by the new revolutionary Cambodian government for sailing in their territorial waters. The ship was 60 miles from mainland Cambodia but within 8 miles of some islands owned by Cambodia. The Cambodians suspected the ship of spying, not surprising considering the long history of US aggression against the people of Cambodia.

Almost immediately the US government reacted. President Ford declared the "National honor" was at stake. All the leading politicians, from Ted Kennedy to Barry Goldwater quickly forgot their "differences" on "who lost Indochina" and joined in the war cries. The Navy hurried in an aircraft carrier and several destroyers to the scene and re-seized the ship and crew. At the same time, Marines were mobilized from Okinawa and moved to Thailand to launch an air assault invasion of the Cambodian island of Tang. And the Air Force bombed the Cambodian mainland destroying oil storage tanks, and strafing Cambodian boats, sinking several.

The whole affair was front page news worldwide. A political point was being made both to the people of the US and to people around the world. "We may have lost in Vietnam and Cambodia," the US rulers said, "but we're still militarily strong and we won't be pushed around by anyone, anywhere." (As Barry Goldwater put it, "No half-ass nation can push us around.") It was also a big attempt by the US rulers to win back some of the support among the American people for their military adventures, support which had greatly eroded during the Indochina War.

At the time of the incident the US government did all it could to distort the truth and keep the facts of the incident from becoming known. Initially it was claimed that only "light casualties" were taken by the Marines in attacking the island; a couple of days later the figures were 17 killed and a total of 40 casualties. But eventually the facts became known: out of elements of two infantry companies

which took part in the attack, 41 men were killed and 70 more were wounded. This means that more men were killed than the entire crew of the Mayaguez ship and that there were enough casualties so that one of the companies was completely wiped out as a combat force. But the government told us it was a "necessary sacrifice" in order to prevent "piracy" on the open seas.

This new GAO report reveals the extent our blood-soaked rulers will go in order to prop up their international political image. The report tells how the US government paid no attention to the fact that the Cambodian government had indicated its willingness to settle the question by diplomatic means and that several neutral governments were already in the process of securing the release of the ship and its crew. The report goes on to tell how the Mayaguez crew had actually been released through these diplomatic efforts hours before the Marine attack was launched, and that the crew had been spot-



Improved US Army recruiting poster in Boston.

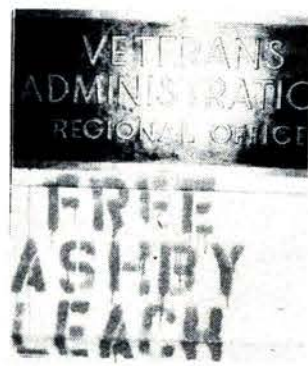
ted on their way back to the ship by Air Force pilots. Despite this information, it was decided to launch this "rescue" attempt. This left the Marines to attack the island even though top Washington officials knew the Mayaguez crew was not there, and in fact the crew itself was fired on and almost shot out of the water by the US Air Force.

All of this is even more outrageous because the information which has now come out has been known in the inner circles of government since the Mayaguez incident took place. The only reason for the

facts to be made public now is the political infighting surrounding the Ford-Carter presidential debates. The day after the GAO report was released, Ford and Carter had their nationally televised debate on foreign policy.

The Mayaguez incident was not about saving the lives of the Mayaguez sailors--they were almost killed by our own government. The Mayaguez incident is another example of how the lives of the common GI's "don't mean nothin'" to the vicious rulers of this country who will go to any extremes in pursuit of their imperialist interests.

## Debate Hits Carter Pardon



"Sign" left by Milwaukee VVAW during Vets Day demo (page 9)

On October 10 about 40 people attended an open forum and debate sponsored by the Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW. The chapter had challenged the Democrats and the VFW to debate the issue of amnesty after Carter had made it an election issue with his limited pardon speech to the American Legion in August, and the question about amnesty during the first Presidential Debate.

As the leaflet put out by the chapter said, "VVAW, a-

long with hundreds of thousands of American people demand Universal, Unconditional Amnesty for All War Resisters. Carter's pardon would only affect 50,000 out of over 1 million Americans in need of amnesty, including 650,000 less-than-honorable discharged vets, 30,000 military deserters, and 227,000 draft violators. But our differences go far beyond mere numbers. Amnesty more than anything else speaks to the crux of the war in Indochina and the ability of the rich to send us off to fight for them in the future."

The Democrats sent the head of the Carter/Mondale Campaign Committee for the State of Wisconsin. From the beginning it was clear that this guy was perfect to represent Carter and the class he serves. He talked out of both sides of his mouth, wishy-washy as hell, and spent as much time promoting himself and his ac-

complishments as he did promoting his candidate.

As it ended up, the debate spent more time on the whole question of the elections and whether we should vote, put our faith in the system to bring about a change, or whether we should rely on our own strength and struggle as the only way to win anything.

For the vets, workers, students and youth who attended the debate, it was a lesson in the real world about the election jive--clearer than any discussions could have brought out. When we'd finished with the Democrat's flunkey, he thanked us for inviting him and almost ran for the door.

**UNIVERSAL,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
AMNESTY**



# Free the ISA 6 IRANIAN STUDENTS UNDER ATTACK

## Prisoners Put Their Names Down

Around the country, VVAW chapters are getting signatures on petitions demanding that the GI Bill be expanded and extended. Thousands of vets--and other people who support the struggles of vets--have signed petitions, some of which have been used at demonstrations to show that the growing veterans' struggle is much larger and stronger than just the vets who are able to join in a particular action.

Thousands of vets are in prisons throughout the US. Facing not only the attempts of the VA to deny them their vets benefits, these veterans also must live under the repression and brutality which is part of the US prison system. And they, like vets on the outside, are fighting back. When VVAW sent copies of the petition to extend and expand the GI Bill to prisoners as part of VVAW's prison newsletter, responses came from around the country.

One brother, from the Iowa State Prison at Fort Madison wrote: "Enclosed is the petition concerning the GI Bill. All those who have signed it are veterans of one branch or another of the armed services. Some from WWII, some from Vietnam, some from peacetime service. Hope this small contribution will help in some way."

Filled in petitions also came in from the Federal Prison in Marion, Illinois; the Federal Prison at Atlanta, Georgia; state prisons in Dallas and Huntingdon, Pennsylvania; Lovelady, Texas; Angola, Louisiana (two separate petitions); Michigan City, Indiana; Jefferson City, Missouri; Tamm, California; Starke, Florida; and Jackson, Michigan (with over a hundred signatures).

A veteran from Jackson said it clearly in explaining why he saw the petitions as important: "Although some may feel petitions to be a trivial thing, there are some of us who see them as 'blows against the empire,' and to me, even one signature is victory in the sense of individual awareness and growth in confronting the oppression that is holding us down."

of one-time aid to Vietnam during the war, making Iran the single largest recipient of US arms and military aid. During French President Giscard d'Estaing's visit in October 1976 to Iran, a billion dollar deal, including 6 nuclear power plants, was concluded.

To please the Shah, the western countries like France and the US are more than willing to cooperate with the Shah and attempt to silence the voice of the ISA abroad. The banning and suppression of the ISA in the US and Europe will help the western countries to better cover up the nature of these deals with the Shah, their involvement in Iran and the true nature of the oppression of the Iranian people at the hands of the Shah and SAVAK, which has resulted in the murder of over 1 million Iranian people to date.

VVAW has long enjoyed the warmest fraternal relations with the ISA here in the US and we urge the fullest possible support of ISA in their demands.

\*The dropping of all fabricated charges and immediate release of Nadar Oskooie (the organizational secretary of the Confederation) and Reza Taksiri.

\*That the deportation orders against Kazem Kardevani (international affairs secretary) and the other three be immediately withdrawn and they be allowed to re-enter France (they are currently in Sweden).

\*Stop the harassment of Iranian students in France and the US.

\*Condemn the criminal activities of SAVAK in Europe and in the US, particularly in this latest wave of attacks on the ISA.

We in VVAW strongly urge everyone to send telegrams and letters of protest to:

Minister of Justice  
13 Place Vendome, 75042  
Paris, Cedex 1, France

Minister of Interior  
Place Beauvau, 75800  
Paris, France

Human Rights Commission  
UN Plaza, UN  
New York, NY

Amnesty International  
55 Theobald's Road  
London, WC1X 8sp, England



Demonstration of Iranian Students against the Shah's regime. Students are wearing masks to protect their identities from SAVAK agents in the US.

In the early morning hours of November 3, 1976, the headquarters of the World Federation of Iranian Students (CISNU) in Paris was raided by French police and all inside were arrested. Four were deported from France, among them the International Affairs Secretary. Two others were charged with "shooting" and "wounding" a "cultural attache" of the Iranian Embassy in France. One of the students charged is the organizational secretary of the CISNU. The charges were soon followed by a massive barrage of propaganda and harassment against ISA and its members in France by the French government.

Within days Iranian students around the world organized large demonstrations in support of the arrested and deported ISA members in France. One demonstration in Houston, Texas on November 9th was attacked by FBI agents and Houston police, resulting in the beating and arrests of at least 91 Iranian students.

The recent attacks on ISA members in France and in the US are clearly a new wave of repression against Iranian students abroad which has been going on for years under the direction of SAVAK, the international secret police which carries out the orders of the Shah of Iran against Iranian people at home and abroad. The Iranian Student Association has long been a thorn in the side of the

Iranian dictator. Outside of Iran, the ISA has always raised the voice of the Iranian people against the tyranny and oppression in Iran taking up the cries of over 100,000 political prisoners imprisoned in the Shah's dungeons. Through demonstrations, conferences, cultural programs and distribution of literature about the situation in Iran, the ISA tries to inform the people of the world and rally their support. It tries to relay to the world the unbearable living conditions of the majority of the Iranian people and their struggle for a free and democratic Iran.

The significance of these recent attacks is readily apparent. Oil rich and strategically located, Iran's continued support is needed by the western powers and their ruling classes to attempt to bail them out of their economic crises, due to the huge accumulation of petroleum wealth under the control of the Shah of Iran. Added to this is the direct role that the Shah plays as puppet and policeman for US interests in the area. The US rulers are willing to go to great lengths to please and pacify the Shah and keep him as an ally in the area.

For example, Kissinger and the Shah concluded a \$55 billion contract last August, including \$15 billion worth of military arms and several nuclear power plants. The sale of arms to Iran now surpasses the figures





# TO HELL WITH THEIR WE WON'T BE

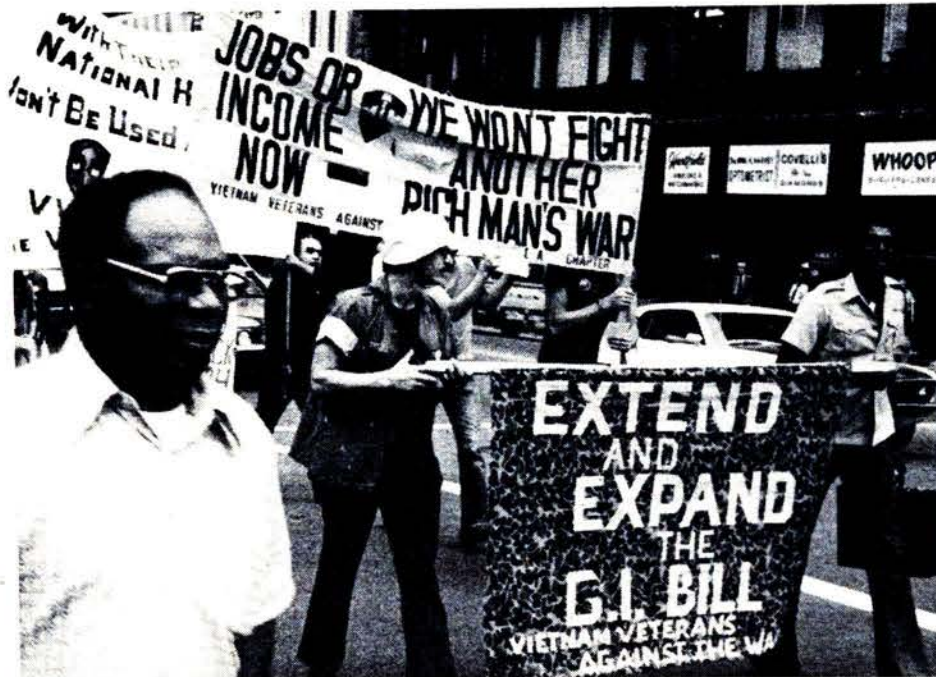
In 1918 on November 11th, there was rejoicing around the world as the armistice was signed ending World War I, at that time by far the bloodiest conflict the world had seen. Since that time, Armistice Day, recently changed to Veterans Day, has been a time set aside to remember the men and women who died in the nation's wars.

But the US ruling class has long seen that the day can be much more--that it can serve as a way for them to try to peddle their propaganda around the glory of wars fought to defend their interests, and to whip up enthusiasm for more of their rich man's wars. And in 1976, with their economy in disastrous shape and seeing that they will have to go to war again--this time against their capitalist counterparts who rule in the Soviet Union--they once again trotted out their veterans groups like the American Legion and VFW to talk about unity (which means we should all unify to keep them in power) and "national honor" (meaning that working people should flock behind the banners of the rich and willingly go off to fight their wars for them).

From coast to coast, chapters of VVAW were out at the Veterans Day ceremonies to expose what "national honor" means, to talk about how vets are used once and thrown away and how the campaign to Free Ashby Leach is a prime example of how vets are dealt with, to demand that the GI Bill be extended and expanded, and to say: TO HELL WITH YOUR NATIONAL HONOR, WE WON'T BE USED AGAIN. Some highlights of VVAW's activities on Vets Day were:

## Chicago

Members of the Chicago VVAW chapter passed out leaflets and carried a banner saying "Once we fought for the rich; Now our fight's against them." to the Veterans Day ceremony at the Chicago Civic Center. Speaker after speaker at the official ceremony praised the great accomplishments of the American Legion and the VFW on behalf of veterans--after several years of hard work they finally managed to persuade the government to change the official date of Veterans Day back to November 11th (at present the federal Veterans Day is part of a three-day weekend at the end of Octo-



VVAW March on Vets Day in Los Angeles

ber). The speakers did not point out that the Legion and similar groups passively supported the cutting off of 3.7 million vets from the GI Bill back in May, or that they supported the new GI Bill which attacks future vets by making it a contributory plan (see article on the front page).

## Los Angeles

50 people marched from the VA outpatient clinic through downtown LA at rush hour, ending up at the Federal Building where they held a rally. As the chapter marched in step, they used the rewritten military cadences (see page 10) and got strong support from the people along the route who cheered on the militant vets.

One of the VVAW speakers at the rally talked about his experiences having been sent to Europe in the military. There he saw several workers' strikes attacked by the police; as the son of a worker himself, he began to question just what kind of "democracy" it was that he had been sent to "defend." And, as a Mexican-American, he saw minorities in this country--and in the military--catching all kinds of hell and harassment. As he pointed out, his mother had told him: "Hey, I didn't bring you up to be killed by these guys. I fought so you could be out there in the world with some kind of understanding, not become a junkie, not be killed by the cops--I don't want you to go." And, he added, we don't want our kids going through the same

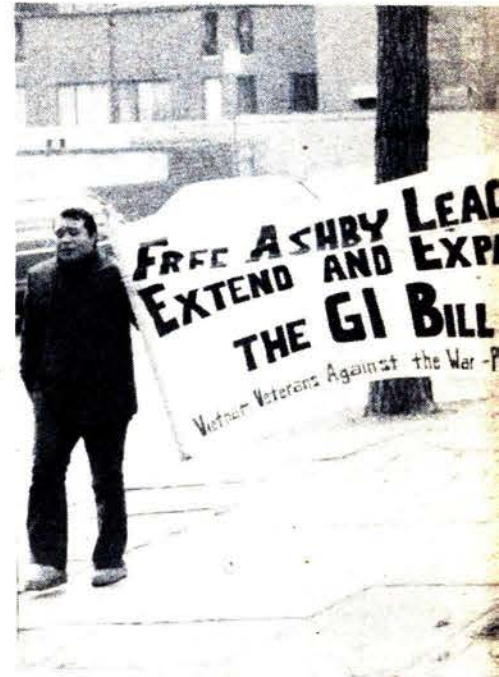
kind of thing.

A second VVAW speaker talked about the economy and the threat of war; talking about the elections, he said, "They were nothing but a two-ring circus; they're trying to say there's some kind of fundamental difference between Carter and Ford, or between the Democrats and Republicans--that's a lot of bull. That's like saying there's a big difference between a strong-arm robber and a con artist--they use different methods but they're all the same and still keep ripping off our money...."

## Philadelphia

During a rally at Independence Hall, one speaker said: "What kind of national honor is there in fighting and dying for the rich man's system. What kind of national honor is there in standing on unemployment lines, rotting in VA hospitals, and scraping by on a shrinking GI Bill. What kind of honor is there for Ashby Leach who sits in jail on \$450,000 bail for fighting in the interests of all vets. There's none!" The rally was followed by a march past the "Liberty Bell" with militant chants of "Ashby Leach must be freed/ He was fighting for what vets need"; and "They talk peace but war's in sight/ A rich man's war, we won't fight."

When VVAW got to the city's ceremony at Washington Park, the police refused to let VVAW in, so the vets marched around the



Philadelphia Vet

park chanting. And even as the cops kept the vets out, one of the official speakers was talking about how this was a free country and that people could always say what they wanted to say! At a later rally, speakers talked about how other veterans organizations refused to fight for vets and then had the cops exclude VVAW from the ceremony because they didn't want to see vets who are fighting against the way vets are used and then thrown aside.

## Milwaukee

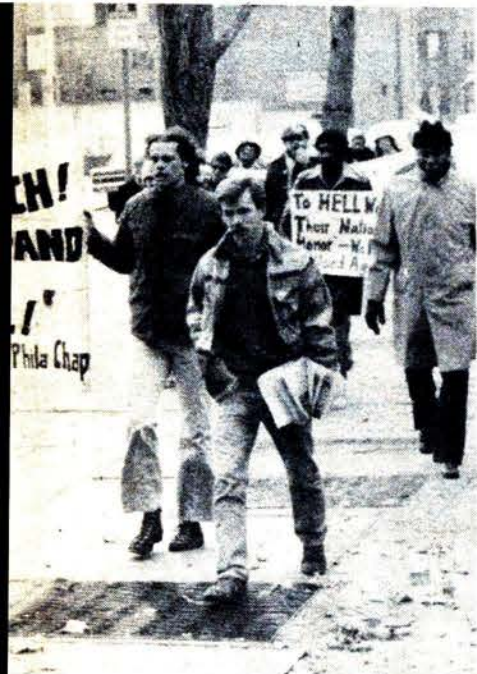
Held in downtown Milwaukee during the evening rush hour, the VVAW demonstration in front of the Veterans Administration, with its picket signs, banners and chants received widespread support from people walking and driving by, with a few people joining the picket line and others honking their horns as a member of the chapter ran down the story of Ashby Leach and why we're taking up the fight to free him.

After the speeches the chapter dramatized the building of the campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill by unrolling a scroll with petitions on it that was 40 feet long and showed thousands of signatures supporting that fight; at that, the scroll only represented about half the signatures the chapter has collected in the course of taking out the campaign.

As the demonstration broke up with chants of Free Ashby Now, there was left, for all to



# R NATIONAL HONOR E USED AGAIN



terans Day March



Vets Day demonstration in front of Milwaukee VA

see, a sign of things to come for the VA, Chessie, and the whole rotten system.

## Bay Area

(The following section about Veterans Day activities in San Francisco was written by the Bay Area Chapter of VVAW.)

For nearly 2 months, VVAW fought to march in the Vets Day parade in San Francisco under the banner "To Hell With Their 'National Honor'--We Won't Be Used Again." At first, everyone we called--from the police department to city hall to the American Legion didn't know anything about the parade. Then finally, after getting the run-around, we found the "head man" on the parade committee, Magruder Wilkenson, who spent a good half hour on the phone telling us we were a bunch of degenerate lightweights and how we didn't know anything about being vets, and that unless we wanted to tangle with him we'd better not even try to get into the parade. But, when a VVAW delegation went to confront him face to face at the American Legion Office, he was shaking like a rabbit, told all his buddies in the room to keep their mouths shut, and refused to answer our questions.

A week before the parade, VVAW called a press conference in front of the San Francisco War Memorial Building to expose the American Legion and the Vets Day Parade Commit-

tee for the flunkies of the rich that they are, and for pretending to speak for veterans when in fact they're stabbing us in the back every time they do something. This year's Vets Day Parade, billed as "A Salute to the Armed Forces" was a damn good example. During this press conference, the Parade Committee crawled into their office to hide, and when VVAW marched into the building accompanied by the press, they pretended like they weren't even in the room!

On November 7, the day of the parade, we saw exactly why they wanted to keep VVAW out. The parade was one big recruiting pitch. There was almost nothing but ROTC units, high school drill teams, and cheer leaders, with a few scattered military units. It was pretty obvious that the rich and their flunkies in the American Legion were using Vets Day to try to whip up business for the recruiters in the high schools. VVAW talked with a lot of these student's parents, and most of them felt like one mother who said, "That's my son marching over there; he looks cute in the parade, but I don't want to see him in a casket a few years from now. I'm glad you're (VVAW) out here!"

AND WE WERE THERE. Just before the parade, 3 truck loads of us convoyed down the parade route under the banner "To Hell With Their 'National Honor'--We Won't Be Used Again!" At points along the route

we stopped and held mini-rallies and leafletted. A bus driver took a handful of leaflets and passed them out on his bus. We talked with vets from WWI to Korea to Vietnam who said, "We're with you guys all the way. We learned the hard way --we won't fight for them again." As we passed a Marine Corps color guard dressed in jungle fatigues, several brothers among them raised their fists in solidarity with us.

During the parade, led by our VVAW banner, we leafletted the entire route, talking with people all along the way. We passed out over 2000 leaflets and received warm support. A number of people took extra leaflets to give to friends. We sold a number of newspapers and VVAW buttons.

As the last contingent--pom-pom girls from Galileo High School--passed the Reviewing Stand (where all the generals and Legion big-wigs sat) VVAW called a rally. A crowd of over 50 people who were watching the parade cheered and applauded as the VVAW speaker talked about how we're standing up to each and every attack the rich are bringing down on us. On this day especially the attack is aimed at the youth who they're trying to con into thinking that fighting for the rich is their only future. And here on Vets Day there wasn't one mention of the 3.7 million vets cut off the GI Bill on Memorial Day this year, or the fact that unemployment a-

mong Vietnam vets is twice the national average, and that we should be building the fight around all of these things. When VVAW talked about Ashby Leach people listened carefully, and when we talked about the campaign we're building to free him, people cheered and clapped.

The Vets Day parade actions were a dynamite victory --a victory for us, all of us who are standing up to the rich and starting to throw them off our backs. And as the VVAW speaker told the crowd by the Reviewing Stand, "Keep your eyes open, 'cause the veterans' movement is getting stronger, and we're gonna take on the rich man whether it's to extend & expand the GI Bill, demanding jobs or income now, or around the fact that vets are saying "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War!" And we sure as hell are gonna be talking with the youth who the rich have their eyes on to be cannon fodder for their next war to protect their worldwide interests." "To Hell With Their 'National Honor'--We Won't Be Used Again."

**FREE ASHBY LEACH**

**EXTEND & EXPAND  
THE GI BILL**

**JOBS OR INCOME**

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



October 25th Demo in Norfolk

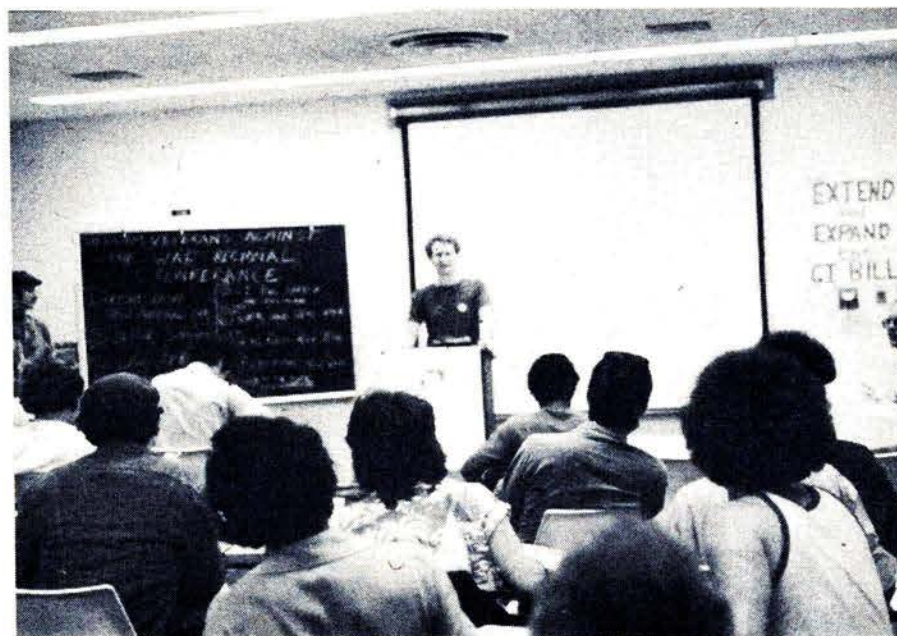
VVAW chapters held actions on or around Vets Day in New York City, in Detroit, in Norfolk, and in the Twin Cities.)



# CONFERENCES UNITE VETS FOR STRUGGLE



Pre-conference demonstration in New York City



Regional Conference session in Los Angeles

In late September and early November VVAW held regional conferences to initiate the national campaign around extending and expanding the GI Bill. The conferences were built broadly and taken out to veterans at schools, VA hospitals and offices, plants, and unemployment lines. As a result, vets who had never heard of VVAW came into contact with the organization. At one school in southern California, a VVAW member went to the local junior college vets club to invite them to attend the conference. He got there just as the club was deciding to disband because of a lack of direction and program. The invitation to the conference sparked discussion and a new enthusiasm, and some of the vets attended the conference in Los Angeles. On the East Coast, 10,000 handouts in English and Spanish were handed out, bringing out the need not only to take up the Extend and Expand the GI Bill campaign, but also the importance of building the veterans movement broadly, including the need to take up the issues of war and jobs, and to stand firmly with the working class against this rotten system.

The first conference to be held was in the midwest in Milwaukee. It began with a rousing demonstration of 50 people through a shopping district and ending at a local military recruiter's office. The Milwaukee VVAW chapter put on a skit

exposing how and why we went into the military in the first place, how we were used by the rich, and the life facing vets upon returning to the world.

The conference followed the demonstration and covered the need to build the extend and expand the GI Bill campaign, the role that vets play in society, and the need to build VVAW organizationally. Discussion around the possibility of a new world war between the US and the Soviet Union was especially good as vet after vet talked about the fact that if a new world war did start, there was no way we'd be siding with our rulers to defend their rotten rule. One vet from Chicago put it well when he said, "The way I look at it, you can either fight for a cause or just be a cause. If you fight because the capitalists tell you to, or because there is someone threatening the rule of the rich, you would be throwing your life away. But if you were to fight for a cause, for your family or friends, well that's a reason to fight."

And that is about it. When we say we won't fight another rich man's war, that is what we are saying: we won't fight for the capitalists, for their banks, their estates, their yachts, their good times. We won't shed our blood so that after a war, with all the terribleness that we know it means for us, they can still be on top of us grinding profit out of our

sweat and blood. It does mean that we will fight! But our fight will be against them, their rotten system, and for our friends, our families and our class.

The East Coast conference took place of the weekend of October 2 and 3 in New York City. On the 2nd, vets from all over the East Coast joined in a march starting at the VA and marching through the streets to Times Square where they held a rally. Enthusiastic response from onlookers added to the militance and spirit of the demonstration.

On the 3rd the conference took up the questions facing vets and began with a good discussion of why the conference and VVAW are small at this time. Discussion was at first one-sided as vets tried to say we are strong and growing but did not speak to the real fact that numerically we are small; as the discussion continued, peoples' understanding grew. It became clear that there were not as many vets around as during the anti-war days, that VVAW was small, and that the conference was small compared to the number of vets on the whole East Coast. What also came out was that VVAW was making mistakes in building the struggle of vets. But more important, this is a new and different period of time. There is the beginning of a new spiral upward as peoples' struggles are on the rise, and a downward spiral in the economy. The system of capitalism is in

deep crisis with no way out. The rich are trying to throw that crisis on the backs of working people while, at the same time, preparing to go to war as a "solution" to their problem. That's a solution we aren't going to accept. The storm is beginning, clouds are overhead, and the struggle of the working class as seen in recent strikes as well as the upsurge of vets--shown in the resistance of Ashby Leach--is moving. In fact this is a sign of our strength--VVAW must take its bearings and begin in earnest to gather this resistance of vets, concentrate it, help to direct it and build for new battles ahead.

The West Coast conference was held a week later in Los Angeles. There was no demonstration but there was also no lack of enthusiasm. The conference began with a slide show put together by the LA Chapter of VVAW showing the history of vets' struggles and putting it in the context of what is going on today. This was followed by vet after vet testifying about their experiences at the hands of the military and the VA, and laying the blame directly at the feet of the rich who use us and then throw us away. One vet talked about coming back from Nam with a buddy hooked on drugs, and how they had sought help from a psychiatrist--who only told them to blame themselves for their problems and then tried

**continued on page 11**



# LETTERS TO VVAW

**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.

No veteran has escaped the chants and songs used in the military, particularly during training. Drill sergeants tell GIs the chants are designed to help march in step or pass the time, but they have a more important purpose--they are written to build morale and trumpet the propaganda of the rich for whom the troops are fighting.

VVAW has said that "Once we fought for the rich, but now our fight's against them." And just as vets are taking telling the rich who run this country what they can do with their plans to stay on top and squeeze every last drop of profit out of us, we're also taking the chants and songs we learned in the military and rewriting them. We call it marching to a different cadence.

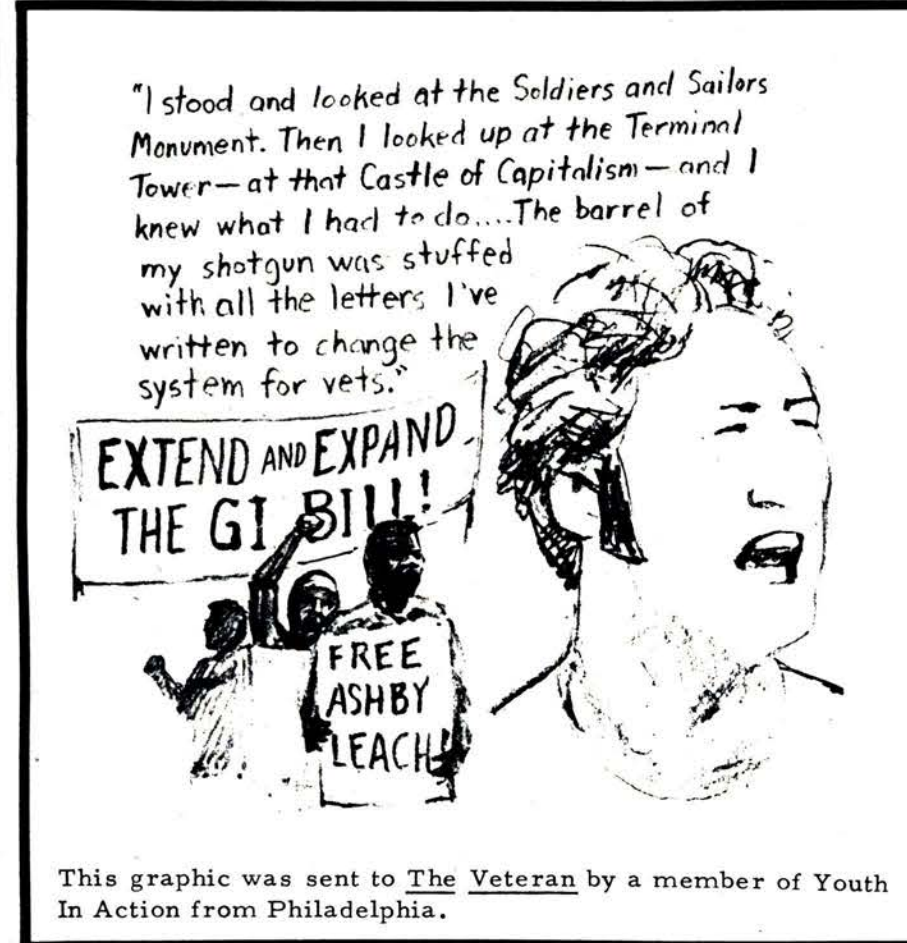
These particular chants were used by VVAW during the Bicentennial Demonstrations in Philadelphia on July 4th, and are being used still by VVAW chapters around the country.

The first song is written to be song to the tune of "I Don't Know But I've Been Told..."

It's the same all over the land,  
(It's the same all over the land)  
Jobs or Income's our demand.  
(Jobs or Income's our demand)

(refrain):

Am I right or wrong?  
You're right!  
Are we weak or strong?  
We're strong!  
Are we movin' on?  
Right on!  
Keep on keepin' on.  
Keep on!



Unemployment, it ain't funny,  
We need jobs, and we need money.

(refrain)

Vets are mad, we've had our fill,

Extend and expand the GI Bill.

(refrain)

We won't fight more rich man's war,

It's the working class we're fighting for.

(refrain)

We're madder than hell, we're building our fight.

Vets and workers will unite.

(refrain)

Listen to this, it ain't funny,  
We do the work and the rich get the money.

(refrain)

\* \* \* \* \*

(The following chant, also based on one used in the military, is done with a chant leader giving the lines and the people giving the responses.)

We gotta get rid of the rich,  
(You're right!)

We gotta get rid of the rich,  
(You're right!)

We slave for the bums, they throw us the crumbs,  
We gotta get rid of the rich.

(You're right!)

The wealth of this land was made by our hands,  
We gotta get rid of the rich.  
(You're right!)

They're driving us day after day,  
(You're right!)

They're trying to cut our pay,  
(You're right!)

We know it ain't right, we're building our fight,  
We're moving them out of the way.  
(You're right!)

We gotta get rid of the rich,  
(You're right!)

There's millions looking for work,  
(You're right!)

Standing in lines for a few lousy dimes,

We'll stand together and fight.  
(All right!)

We gotta get rid of the rich,  
(You're right!)

They want us to fight their wars,  
(You're right!)

We're making it clear, our fight is here,  
We know what we're fighting for,  
(You're right!)

\*\*\*\*\*

To The Veteran:

In the August/September issue of The Veteran, I enjoyed reading the article "Marchin' To The Tune of the Ruling Class." As a Vietnam-era veteran, I have gone to many American Legion meetings only to find out that they're not concerned about us but telling the public the "good old stories of WW II and the Korean War." Recently, I have attended a job fair that was sponsored by the local American Legion, only to find out that I had wasted my time in filling out a dozen application forms.

Out of all those application forms that I filled out for jobs, there was only one "local merchant" that was interested in me. It was good old Uncle Sam (Army), saying that I ought to go back in the service. But before I stepped in the doors of the local American Legion, I was warned by members of VVAW that I was wasting my time going in trying to seek a job.

After I was released from active duty, I attended a local college for about a year. I did fairly well in school but it (college) wasn't my bag. Right now, I am lucky to have a job. It doesn't pay well but that's all I have right now at the time. Before I conclude, I want to extend my best wishes to the staff of the Veteran for putting out an excellent journal on veteran's affairs....

Gordon Howe  
Box 215  
East Brunswick  
New Jersey

continued from page 10



Milwaukee Regional demo

to put them on more drugs. Eventually, his friend killed himself. Another vet answered that that was how the system worked: blame yourself for the problems of the system. If you don't have a job, it's your own fault. If the GI Bill doesn't come, it's your fault. But it isn't our fault--it's the fault of a system run for the profit of a few at the expense of the many. He added that, as far as he could see, we had to take on that system and that meant building organization--and that organization was VVAW, "the only national veterans organization that really

stood for the interests of vets. If you don't belong to VVAW, why not?"

All of the conferences took up the possibility of another war, the need to build the campaign to Free Ashby Leach, and the need to build VVAW into a powerful organization. There were successes in that new vets were brought into VVAW, gaining a deeper understanding of the system we all face along with the necessity to fight against it. And, to requote the vet from California, "If you don't belong to VVAW, why not?"



continued from page 1

## G.I. Bill

If future vets contribute \$50 a month as GIs they will receive only \$5400 overall, \$8,740 less than current vets! If they contribute \$75 a month, \$6,040 less! The current cost of a decent education and cost of living far exceed what vets are getting now. The very idea that even the maximum (\$6,040) will be any help towards that schooling is an outrageous attack on veterans. For these vets, payments will be cut by over 50%.

The program is voluntary. Consequently many GIs may not feel that it is important to contribute at the time and then discover later, upon discharge, that they have nothing left to them. Today, a higher percentage of vets than ever before are using the G I Bill just to survive. Many never intended to use these benefits at all, then were faced with high unemployment after they served the rich in the military - used once and then thrown away, like empty bottles. If the future vets choose not to participate while in the military, they'll have no future alternatives.

If a person drops out of school under this new program, he or she, regardless of the circumstances, will get their original money back and be kicked off the program. This is contrasted to the present program where an individual can change their program twice and drop out temporarily twice and resume their benefits at a later date. If a person is discharged, that person only gets the contribution plan for those months served.

The manner that money is going to be handled by the VA and Defense Department is questionable too. It is extremely likely that as the program unfolds, GIs in the military will be paying for the education of other vets who are in school at the time. A similar situation today is Social Security, where we who are working today are paying for our grandparents' social security. The money seems to have disappeared, having been re-invested in floating big corporations and banks, to save their ass and skin ours. This plan will be no exception. With benefits of current vets being slashed to nothing, its ridiculous to believe that vets in the future will get better. The economic crisis that the rich in this country are plunging into and trying to drag us along with them isn't

going to improve. Like the old saying goes, "They're stealing from Peter to pay Paul." But Peter ain't even going to see the money again, and neither is Paul. It doesn't profit the rich to pay vets benefits. As soon as they can they sweep us behind the door, slowly with new attacks like this, the better for them.

The military has jumped into this new program with both feet, advertising it as the greatest thing to come down the pike, in order to suck more and more young people into the military, young people working for \$1.25 an hour (if they have a job at all). The ruling class needs plenty of fresh meat for the war that's coming and they hope to sell this bogus program to working class kids across the country, young people who are really interested in making a better life for themselves.

At the same time the national leadership of organizations like the VFW, DAV, and American Legion pushed this program hard in Congress under the cover of "more money for our vets" or "these vets aren't combat vets so they don't need as much as we do." What a bunch of bull---! These people are the direct representatives of vets to the US ruling class, front men who do what they're told and purposely try to divide all vets from each other.

One example of this is the current issue of the Legion, national magazine of the American Legion, which spent almost the entire issue glorifying past wars or beating drums for the next. The new benefits plan

which they actively fought for isn't even mentioned. Instead, the only mention of G I Bill benefits are two short articles (p. 27) attacking Vietnam-era vets called "Current G I Bill Already Has Cost More Than Two Previous Bills" and "Some Veterans Eligible for Extra Benefits Under G I Bill," an article which clues us in on some great jobs at the VA for \$2.50 an hour! They have the damn nerve of suggesting that vets cut off the G I Bill use this to pay their way through school. We say they know where they can take this crap and shove it!

VVAW stands firm on this and any other attacks. We're not going to take it! We are a fighting veterans organization, that means we fight for WW I, WW II, and Korean vets, and future vets too! It makes no difference whether its WW II vets being ripped off and having to live like animals or future vets, used in another war and then cast aside like we were. The rich want to treat us like trash and then use our "good" name on holidays. Like this past Vets Day or Memorial Day when they cut 3.7 million vets off the Bill. We will not stand by and let the rich bleed us, first in war and now here at home. Join us in the fight to "Extend and Expand the G I Bill."

**NO CUTS, NO WAY,  
THE G.I. BILL IS  
HERE TO STAY!**



VVAW banner at the Veterans Day parade in San Francisco--  
story on page 9.

## Join VVAW

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is a nationwide organization of veterans from all wars which fights for the needs of vets and stands shoulder to shoulder with working people in our common struggle against the rich man's system. VVAW chapters across the country are building a national campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill, are demanding Jobs or Income Now, and are saying that We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War.

VVAW grew out of the movement against the Indochina War as veterans of that war joined together to fight against U.S. involvement. And, as the US government was forced to withdraw, VVAW began to turn its attention to the way in which veterans have been used once and then thrown away.

Membership in VVAW is open to veterans and others who want to build the veterans' struggle. It includes selling The Veteran (the VVAW national newspaper), wearing a VVAW button and paying dues; all members are encouraged, as much as possible to participate in the activities of local VVAW chapters. VVAW is a democratic organization with major decisions made by the membership at periodic regional and national meetings. For more information on joining VVAW, contact the local chapter or the VVAW National Office, P.O. Box 20184, Chicago, IL 60620. (312) 651-1583.



# VVAW SPARKS STRUGGLE AT MINNESOTA VETS CONF.

On October 25, in Mankato, Minnesota, members of the Minneapolis/St Paul chapter of VVAW attended the yearly meeting of the Minnesota Association of Collegiate Veterans (MACV). From beginning to end, the meeting was organized to steer veterans, angered by the abuse they receive while collecting the GI Bill into dead-end channels.

The meeting opened with the commander of the Mankato American Legion post telling vets to join the ranks of the Legion, "the most powerful veterans' organization around." What he didn't say is that the Legion is the "most powerful" because it is backed up by the class that rules the country--the rich. What he didn't say is that the Legion, through its national leadership, spoke out publicly for a cut-off date in benefits to Vietnam-era vets,

for the move to limit eligibility from 10 to 8 years, and for taking away school benefits from soldiers now in service.

While allowing the commander time to tell his lies, even MACV state officers had to point out that the American Legion had done a poor job in representing Vietnam-era veterans. A VVAW member went further and pointed out that the Legion has not represented vets of any era, that it was organized by Theodore Roosevelt and top military brass to build support for imperialist ventures of the rich, like Vietnam, not to fight for the demands of vets for just treatment.

It was a representative from the National Association of Concerned Veterans (NACV) however, that raised the blood pressure of most of the vets to the boiling point. Waving the veterans bill that recently past

Congress, he laid the blame on veterans. Mocking vets for complaining but not actively lobbying Congress, writing letters to their "representatives," and drumming up support for smooth-talking politicians, he attempted to cover over who is really to blame for the abuses that vets suffer and what vets can do to fight back.

In a speech delivered earlier in the meeting, a VVAW member had exposed the real nature of what was coming down. "These abuses are not just happenstance--just the 'way it is.' They are the result of the crisis this system is in--the attempt of the rich in this country to make vets, workers and others, who had nothing to do with creating that crisis, carry it on their backs." In recounting the takeover of the Statue of Liberty by 15 vets last June, the participation of

hundreds of veterans in the Rich Off Our Backs Coalition in Philadelphia on July 4th, the nationwide campaign to extend and expand the GI Bill, and the struggle of Ashby Leach to get just treatment by the VA and the Chessie railroad system, VVAW pointed out that veterans have begun to fight back.

Thus, all the crap that the NACV representative was giving out was exposed from the beginning. As the NACV representative continued his attack on veterans, many throughout the room began turning the tables around. One vet from a vocational school in Canby, told of his two-day wait in the VA offices in St Paul to find out what had happened to his checks. Only after tearing up the waiting room was he successful in getting some attention to his

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## Conference



rich, go off and fight their war and, once it is over, return home with these same rulers still firmly holding on to their positions of wealth and power. And that, as discussed in VVAW regional conferences (see page 10) isn't at all what we're looking for.

Because people who see the world in this light do not want to admit that what their position finally says is to support the US ruling class, they go through all kinds of verbal gymnastics talking about "main

dangers," "main sources of war," "main blows," etc. During the evening session of the conference, Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, shattered some of this verbal fancy footwork when he said, "I've heard all this muddled nonsense about main blows, main enemy, etc. I'm going to set this straight right now. The main enemy (i.e. the two superpowers) is the main danger in the world today and that's who we'll direct the main blow against."

Throughout the morning speeches, the afternoon workshops, and the evening debate, the position put forward by the RCP--and supported by the great majority of the 2200 people attending the conference--sees the clash between the two imperialist superpowers as the source of the growing danger of war, and the moving force behind much of what is happening internationally. Inside this framework, particular regions, countries or situations are more threatened by one of the superpowers than the other. In the countries of Eastern Europe, for instance, the revolutionary drive of the people of those countries to be free of outside domination must be directed against the rulers of the Soviet Union while US imperialism is much the lesser danger at this time. Just the reverse is true in the case of South America.

The way in which conditions can change--sometimes rapidly--is seen in a country such as Egypt where, for a period of time, they were closely allied with the Soviet Union, receiving large amounts of economic and military aid and assistance. But what they increasingly discovered was that this aid had a whole lot of strings attached to it and that when decisions were made for the good of the country rather than at the direction of the Soviet Union, those strings were pulled tight. And so they finally rejected Soviet

aid, a good thing for the people of the country. At the same time, however, they began to turn to the other superpower for help--and US aid comes with all the same strings, just a different puppet-master.

As was pointed out again and again throughout the conference, a correct understanding of the situation in the world is crucial to building our struggle here at home--that is why workers, veterans, students from all over the country came to the conference so that they could return home to whatever battles they were fighting with a clearer understanding of the international situation. Particularly during the debate in the evening session of the conference, it was seen that issue after issue came down to our redoubling our efforts to throw off the imperialist rulers of this country as the greatest single contribution the American people can make to the struggles of the world's people. We can--and do--fight against war preparations in this country, against US operations in potential hot spots (like US troops in South Korea) and expose new moves by both US and Soviet Union imperialist bosses. But though struggling against the imperialist maneuverings of the US ruling class can have an effect--as it did in the massive support for the Indochinese people--the only long range solution is to get rid of the imperialist ruling class.



# San Francisco I-Hotel Tenants Demand: **HALT EVICTIONS**

The eight-year long fight against eviction of the residents of the International Hotel in San Francisco's Chinatown-Manilatown district continues to grow. While the hotel's residents and the thousands of people in the San Francisco area who support them have not yet won a final victory against the possibility of eviction, they are continuing to force the courts and the sheriffs to postpone and postpone the actual evictions, and may force the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to give them the chance to buy their long-time home.

The 80 residents of the International Hotel itself are mainly retired Chinese and Filipino workers. Most of the peo-

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## **Minn. Meeting**

case. Other vets in the meeting followed suit with stories of how they, their friends and classmates had suffered late checks, cutoffs, restrictions and the many other ways that politicians and the VA have found to force vets out of school.

As voices grew louder and louder, the president of MACV did his damndest to cut off the discussion. More concerned about maintaining order and passing meaningless resolutions, he was finally successful in stifling the discussion. But not before many vets had begun to see that the whole meeting was organized to cover up the abuses vets are facing, not expose them and concretely decide what could be done to fight back. After the meeting, vets from three vets clubs approached VVAW for more information on its activities.

As the crisis gets worse and as the rich in this country step up their attempts to force vets, workers, students, and others to carry the load, more and more of us will be fighting back. To deflect our blows, organizations like MACV and its big brother, NACV will set up to tie us up in passing meaningless resolutions, listening to politicians and other lackeys of the rich, and generally doing everything possible to keep us from organizing ourselves and fighting the source of our oppression.

ple living in nearby buildings, all slated for demolition, are retired Chinese workers and workers of other nationalities. Many are in their 70s, 80s, or 90s. For long years they have toiled for miserable wages as agricultural laborers, seamen, restaurant workers. Many live on benefits of less than \$60 per month. In addition, the I-Hotel houses the Asian Community Center, Everybody's Bookstore, a community art workshop and gallery, and several commercial businesses.

The attempts by the capitalists--represented by the Four Seas Corporation--at eviction are a prime example of how they don't give a damn if the residents of the I-Hotel have a place to live or not--they only want their "right" to suck profits out of this valuable real estate. Hotel residents, many of whom have lived there 30 and 40 years, have made their stand clear: to hell with your profits. And thousands of people have rallied to support their struggle.

Chinatown-Manilatown is one of the most overcrowded slums in the country. 96,000 people live in a 15 block core area next to the city's financial district with its towering modern hotels and office buildings and skyrocketing land values. Many of the employed workers labor for poverty-level piece-rate wages in the garment sweatshops or in the hundreds of restaurants in Chinatown. Thousands more are unemployed. 60% of the families are forced to subsist on yearly incomes of \$3000 or less. Almost half the housing units are single-rooms in run-down hotels or above stores where families have to rent two or three rooms, often sharing communal kitchens and baths. Housing in the area is older than 95% of the housing in the rest of the Bay Area.

Of course the people who run this country care nothing about the miserable conditions people are forced to live in. But they are very concerned that these hotels and apartments are in the way of further commercial development that will put the valuable land to more profitable use. The block of Kearny Street where the I-Hotel stands is all that is left of the Manilatown section that



The bitter struggle of tenants in the I-Hotel and the Victory Bldg. has brought other tenants from Chinatown and other communities to fight evictions and has won active support of workers and others throughout the Bay Area.

once covered 12 square blocks. Now the Transamerica Pyramid and luxury Holiday Inn loom up in its place. Scores of other apartments and stores in Chinatown have already been picked for demolition, including the Chinatown YMCA.

The bosses and their media--and, when confronted, Mayor Moscone of San Francisco--have tried to cloak their efforts to level the homes of hundreds of workers in hypocritical expressions of sympathy for the "poor tenants" and meaningless "hopes" that they can be relocated in some other housing. But the tenants of the I-Hotel and other hotels in the area, many of whom have already been evicted, have not been diverted by all these lies. Many know that the capitalists will throw them into the street if they can, or worse.

Since 1968 the residents have been fighting the attempts to throw them out. Countless times, courts have set eviction dates, only to see them postponed in the face of the determination and resistance of the residents. When the courts ordered residents out back on July 15th, the Committee to Defend the I-Hotel got over 5000 signatures on their No Eviction petitions and held a rally of 400 people marching through Chinatown in protest. The court backed down. On September 12 another rally was attended by over 500 people including other neighborhood residents and workers from different industries. Expressions of solidarity and support have come from workers and others across the country.

Seeing that some of the directors of the Four Seas Corp (which wants the residents out in order to "develop" the land profitably) owned businesses in Chinatown, picketlines have

been set up. In one incident, one shopper, annoyed as she picked through a stack of ginger, wanted to know "What's wrong? I always shop here." A long-time I-Hotel resident told her, "Art Chan, the owner is trying to kick out tenants at the I-Hotel and Victory Building (next door); we're boycotting his store until they withdraw the eviction order. You know how much rent is going up and the rich keep tearing down what's left of low-rent housing. Where're we supposed to live?"

"That's not right--I really didn't know," she said as she threw the ginger back and walked away.

Tenants and supporters are now demanding, once again, that the most recent eviction notice be lifted. The sheriff's department, which must serve the order, has already pleaded with the judge for "as much time as possible to prepare--this is going to be difficult." Although, at the time this article was printed, a new eviction notice should have been posted, there is none as yet. Because of the mass struggle around the issue, a committee of the SF Board of Supervisors has approved purchase of the building in order to sell it to the tenants. The full Board will act in the near future.

Even if the Board does buy the building, something they have refused to do in the past, all the problems of the I-Hotel tenants, and others in the area, won't be solved. It will be one more step in their struggle against the rich who constantly put profits ahead of people. As one speaker from the Asian Community Center said, in buying all this property and attempting to evict the tenants, the "Four Seas Corporation has invested \$3.5 million in creating a working class fortress."



# Elections

Continued from page 1



Part of a demo of 200 held in Chicago on election night, Nov. 2.

glowing promises. For many people, however, there's still a shred of hope. "Ford is a pretty decent person," people thought; "Maybe he will be able to make things better for us--at least he's honest." And the rich who were backing Ford pushed the same idea to the max.

For even more people it was "Carter hasn't had anything to do with the mess we're in, so maybe he'll be able to pull us out of it." Even Carter's representatives couldn't do much better; when the Chicago Chapter of VVAW held an election debate, the person sent by the Carter campaign could only say, "Well, we don't know much about Carter and what he'll do, but he'll probably be better than Ford." Or, as one woman who voted for Carter put it, "I just crossed my fingers, closed my eyes, and pulled the lever."

Playing on what hope people had, the rulers of this country went to tremendous lengths to whip up our enthusiasm to vote. Neither candidate stirred up much excitement, so excitement had to be created. And the media was a willing ally of the rich in trying to get people interested. Playboy interviews, the photogenic families of the candidates, and finally, as polls showed that fewer and fewer people were planning to vote, there was suddenly the "thrill" of a close election. Radio, TV, newspapers blared out the message that it doesn't really matter who you vote for, but you're got to get out there and vote.

For the bankers and industrial barons who pumped millions into each candidate and who run the media which built them up, the point wasn't which politician won; they wanted to use this election to restore faith in the "democratic process." They wanted to convince the American people that

it is really us who run the country, and that no matter what happens from here on, we are the ones to blame; and that the only hope we have to solve the problems facing us is to put our faith in their electoral system. As John D Rockefeller IV, governor-elect of West Virginia, and nephew of Nelson and David said of voting, "It's not just a way to change things. It's the only way."

So Carter will soon assume the presidency. Will he do anything about unemployment, despite his loud campaign rhetoric? Hardly. Maybe he'll come up with some small-scale public works project. He's already stated, "Why pay a man \$80 for doing nothing (unemployment compensation) when you can pay him \$100 a week to rebuild the railroads." That's the essence of his "solution" to unemployment: lay off railroad workers making somewhere close to a living wage and drive down all wages.

And what about Carter's promises to veterans? In a letter sent out by the Carter campaign, he says "I believe there is a historic covenant between the people of our great country and those who have borne the pain, suffering, and wounds of war...." And then he gets down to "specifics"--"If I am elected, I will try to assure that Vietnam veterans are not forgotten but are given the same honors and benefits as those who fought in earlier wars."

Great! That's just what we needed. Maybe he means that, like the veterans of World War I, we'll have to pull off a Bonus March to even get the crumbs that Carter and his class are willing to let us have? Or maybe it means that we'll be honored by having wreaths laid on our graves every Veterans Day by the American Legion. No thanks. Our needs are far different than that--we need

decent jobs, an adequate GI Bill, good VA healthcare along with the long list of things that all working people need in this country.

So what's going to change when Carter takes over the White House in January? What will be the result of years of campaigning and promising and smiling at the electorate? There may be some new faces (and probably not too many of them) and that's about it. Carter will be head of the machinery of government. He'll claim to be acting on behalf of the people. But Carter can only do as other presidents before him have--maintain an "order" which keeps a handful on top of society and the great majority of people on the bottom. No appeals for "unity" can stop the working people from fighting for the things they need in order to survive against that class of capitalists who take all that is produced. Nor can veterans afford to sit idly by while gains which have been won through our struggles in the past are chipped away. And we won't!

What the rulers of this country are trying to hide is that the capitalist system is governed by laws of development, not by the wishes of this or that politician. As long as the whole set-up in this country is based on the majority of the people slaving their lives away in the factories and mills while the fruits of their labor go to the capitalist owners, then unemployment, decay, war, and greater exploitation will be the result. The capitalists are required to drive the workers harder and harder to squeeze ever more profit and just as surely, the workers will fight back and resist their oppression. This is a basic law of capitalism. Jimmy Carter cannot change this, nor does he want to considering that he himself has grown rich off the labor of others.

No doubt once Carter is President we will be told for month after month to "give him a chance." But the real steps forward for people are not "gifts" from politicians like Carter, but the results of our own struggles. Across the country people are fighting these rulers on different battlefronts: in strikes to win a decent standard of living, in battles to prevent closings of schools and hospitals, in the fight against wars and military adventures. Vets are fighting cutoffs in the GI Bill for entire schools as in the Boston area, or taking on the Chessie system and the courts to win freedom for Ashby Leach and further expose the way that vets are dealt with.

Even while the election votes were being totalled, there were demonstrations around the country under the slogan "Politicians Fight For \$\$ Interests, We Must Fight For Our Own." Called by the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committees, the spirited demonstrations won support from many who saw or heard about them. In cities from Los Angeles to Boston, VVAW Chapters took part in these demonstrations uniting with the need to expose the lies about national "unity," and to point to the nature of the system under which we live.

The demonstrations won support because they did more than just expose the fraud that elections are, or talk about the phoney "unity" which politicians push in order to keep their cronies on top. The demonstrations also pointed to the solution to the problems we face--that what we've got we've won through fighting for it, and that to keep it, we have to continue to fight. What workers are saying and vets are uniting with is this: "Our political activity will not be confined to pulling a lever every four years, to choosing between two servants for those who rob us and keep us down. We fight every day for what we need to live--and that fight is growing. The more they attack us and the more they try to make us accept their attacks with window dressing like the elections, the more we must take matters into our own hands. And that's what we are doing. We make society run, why can't we run society?"



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# HOW UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION WAS WON



The following interview was made with a veteran fighter, a garment worker in New York City. As a young worker in the 1930's, he took part in some of the major battles for unionization and unemployment insurance. Today, after 40 years in the struggle, he is still active in building the workers' movement as a member of the United Workers Organization of New York-New Jersey.

The interview was first printed in UWOC News, the national publication of the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee. With chapters in major cities around the country, UWOC is fighting to organize the unemployed under the slogan, "Employed/Unemployed; Same Crisis, Same Fight." Like the Unemployed Councils of the 30's, they march under the banner "We Won't Scab and We Won't Starve." For more information about UWOC or to get copies of their publications, write UWOC, P.O. Box 17449, Chicago, IL 60617.

VVAW works closely with UWOC around the country. With unemployment among vets even higher than among non-vets, VVAW, like UWOC, raises the demand Jobs or Income Now. The struggle of vets for jobs was also part of the battles described in the interview. Not only were many veterans involved in the hunger marches talked about in the interview, but the demand for unemployment compensation was one of the major demands of the Bonus March in 1932 when 25,000 veterans and their families turned Washington DC into a vets encampment.

Question: What were conditions like during the Great Depression?

Answer: There was no such thing as unemployment compensation at that time. People were faced with being thrown out of their homes, and the question of where the next meal was coming from became a life and death issue. Soup lines were set up by the federal government, by various charities, and by the Salvation Army. The government gave away cases of apples that unemployed workers would try to sell for five cents apiece. Banks were closing all over the place and people's life savings were wiped out over-

night. Shanty-towns sprang up all over the place to provide bleak shelter for those who had been evicted. All the while President Hoover was saying recovery is just around the corner and that the solution was to put more money into big business. This jerk had the honor of having the shanty-towns named after him. They were called Hoovervilles.

Q: What was it like trying to find work during those times?

A: We wore out our shoes looking for work. With one nickel in our pockets to get us through the day, we couldn't afford train-fare, but had to save our nickel for that one

thin meal. The hiring halls were packed with workers hoping desperately to be one of the lucky ones to get a job. We would go to shape-up at 4 o'clock in the morning looking for a day's work. Sometimes you had to pay the stewards a \$3 bribe for the privilege of working. During those times I could never find a job that lasted for more than a few months. In the face of all these problems people were beginning to move.

Q: Could you go into that some more?

A: At first people were kind of in a state of shock from what was going on. The Depression hit like some kind of natural disaster that you couldn't do anything about, but do your best to get over. But pretty soon the anger and hatred of the workers began pouring out and people began fighting. In these fights the Unemployed Councils played a key role.

Q: What were the Unemployed Councils?

A: The Councils were organizations of unemployed workers dedicated to fighting the capitalists for better living conditions, for unemployment insurance. The Unemployed Councils built massive battles against unemployment.

Q: What was the day to day work of the Unemployed Councils? How did they build the struggle?

A: As far as the Councils were concerned, their job consisted of organizing workers on a block by block basis. One of the major struggles was against evictions. Where a family was getting evicted because they couldn't pay the rent, the Council organized workers to fight the marshalls and the police. The marshalls would try to move the furniture out and the workers would block them and move it back. There were thousands of bloody battles in the streets. The Councils would gather food for families that had none. They organized entertainment and cultural and educational activities. In this way the Unemployed Councils formed broad alliances with the people and with other organizations, like senior citizens clubs, church groups and labor unions. When the time came for a demonstration, the Councils could

put out the call and thousands of workers would come out.

Q: Is this the way unemployed workers came together to fight for their demands?

A: The main way. All across the country the Unemployed Councils were an active force. In 1930 here in New York City for example, 110,000 workers jammed Union Square to demand unemployment insurance, jobs at union wages and an end to child labor, and health and retirement benefits. The demonstration was mercilessly attacked by 25,000 cops, beating and trampling anyone they could get their hands on. It was clear that the same people who had thrown us out of work were now deathly afraid of us. In 1934 the Councils brought workers from all over the country to Washington, DC. This was a real disciplined Hunger March that moved from town to town and kept picking up the support of broad masses of working people.

Q: How were the workers able to build the fight in the face of all these attacks?

A: From these kind of actions millions of workers were learning who were their friends and who were their enemies. The AFL came out in the early 30's saying that the demand for relief was Un-American and that the Unemployed Councils were a communist conspiracy. The Councils and the CP did a lot of education to counter these attacks. Leaflets and pamphlets answered questions like: Who's responsible for the economic crisis? Why are all the banks closed? What side are the politicians on? Why are the police attacking us? Millions of workers saw that the real danger wasn't with the Unemployed Councils or the CP, which stood side by side with the workers in their struggles, but the capitalist system that threw one-quarter of the work force out of work and allowed thousands to starve or freeze to death, while brutally attacking any struggle to fight these conditions. The '30's was a time when workers of this country, employed and unemployed alike, rose up and fought the capitalists tooth and nail for a decent life and a decent future.