

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION-PRIVACY ACTS SECTION

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

CONFIDENTIAL

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ENCLOSURES:

Enclosed for the Bureau are leaflets and hand-outs obtained at captioned conference by [REDACTED] and identified as follows:

- (1) 12 page (legal size) leaflet from VVAW/WSO, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- (2) 6 page New York chapter "Newsletter"

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"ENCLOSURE ON DUTY RAMP"  
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DATE 8/25/88 BY SP4 JML/WA

# VVAW/WSO NYC CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - MONDAY, Jan. 6, 7:30 PM-SHARP

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The next General Membership (GM) meeting will be held, at the office, on Ja. 6th; at 7:30 PM sharp. Its really crucial that people arrive on time, what continually happens is that the meetings start an hour late because people wander in late. This makes the meeting run longer and very tiring. Please have consideration for your brothers and sisters...  
COME ON TIME COME ON TIME COME ON TIME

### PROPOSED AGENDA

- a) Announcements b) Report from the St. Louis National Steering Committee Meeting
- c) Steering Committee Elections, d) Collection of Dues & Voting Determination.
- e) Chapter Program Report, f) Jan. 27th, Demonstration (Paris Peace Agreement)

The Dec. issue of our paper Winter Soldier, has been "lost" in transit. Well folks folks like the Dec. paper are going to arrive sometime next June, The REA doesn't know where they are. As we probably won't get them in time for this mailing, the next paper you will receive will be the Jan. issue.



What's that envelope doing in this mailing?  
 We thought that the new year and new development of commitment to the chapters work, that some of you might like to make a donation to the chapter now.  
 We're not taking anyone off the mailing list if they don't contribute, especially since we understand what peoples finances are like this year, but even a dollar helps a lot.  
 We would like to thank all of you who have contributed to the chapter this year, you have helped us to be as successful as we have been this year.  
 P.S. If you put a stamp on the return envelope, it save us 1¢.

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# IMPLEMENT the TREATY END ALL SUPPORT for THIEU and LON NOL!

G.R.U.N.K. 10 Update.

On Oct. 29, ten people-including members of N.Y.C. VVAW/WSO- took over the Cambodian Mission to the U.N. to demand that the Royal Government of National Union (G.R.U.N.K.) be seated in the U.N. and that the U.S. supported puppet Lon Nol be thrown out. They were arrested by the F.B.I. and the N.Y.C. police. Eventually the federal charges were dropped, and a hearing was held in Dec. on the state charges of harassment and trespassing.

The purpose of the hearing was for the state to provide enough evidence that there is a basis for a trial. This means they have to show reasonable evidence that harassment and trespassing took place.

In court were two cops and two representatives of the Lon Nol government. The cop testified first that he responded to a police call, went to the building the mission was in, went up to the 27th floor, talked through some locked doors, and after two hours the doors were opened by the people he saw there in court. He contradicted himself too many times to count as the ten defendants each cross-examined his testimony and showed him to be confused on many facts.

The DA decided, under the circumstances, to drop the charges of harassment.

No testimony was taken as to who was the legal tenant of the mission, ie, who was the legal representative of the Cambodian people. We argued that there was no evidence of trespass, therefore no crime, and that the charge of trespassing should also be dropped. The judge refused and sent the people (the GRUNK 10) to trial. As he left the bench we marched out chanting "Self-determination for the Cambodian nation". Court guards tried to arrest the defendants, but refrained on orders from the judge.

The trial has been scheduled for January 30, 1975. Call the office for more info and where to go for the trial.



### THE TWO-LINE STRUGGLE



After many months of discussion and debate, the New York City Chapter voted unanimously for the vets and GI base and focus. For those of you who are new to the organization, this debate centered around whether VVAW/WSO should be a general anti-imperialist organization that worked on many issues and focused its organizing on all people rather than a specific group, or whether the focus of the organization should be on vets and GIs, relating to their day-to-day problems and struggles and tying these up with the overall anti-imperialist movement.

While as yet there has been no specific resolution of this question at the level of the national organization, the National Steering Committee Meeting in St. Louis (Dec. 27-31) should move things forward towards a resolution of the struggle for the national organization.



### GETTING DOWN TO BRASS TACKS

There has been a lot of discussion going on in the chapter since the Nov. 11th action. The topic has been program. In the sum-up of our past year's practice (and specifically Veterans Day), we came to the conclusion that our major weakness has been the lack of a clear program. This made it hard to plan all our actions and activities to fit into an organized whole, and led to a scattering of energies rather than a concentration of energy. Because we feel it is extremely important to get ourselves straightened out and get a clear program, most of the work of the Steering Committee and the Action Committee this past month has gone into developing a program. The Steering Committee recommended a series of 3 campaigns, one against the VA, one against unemployment and one against the military. There are 9 overall guidelines for the campaigns:

1. Our struggle is revolutionary, not reformist.
2. State power cannot be made to serve the people. We are organizing veterans, not the state.
3. Use ~~the campaign~~ <sup>the program</sup> to raise other anti-imperialist issues and win people to these struggles.
4. Fight racial, national and sexual discrimination. <sup>Build a unified multi-national anti-imperialist veterans movement.</sup>
5. Keep demands winnable but don't confuse victory in one battle with the final victory of the campaign. <sup>program</sup>
6. Don't limit ourselves to what the organs of state power say they can do. <sup>is possible</sup>
7. We don't want any special privileges. We raise specific demands because they are in the interest of the working class and the anti-imperialist movement.
8. We should open all three fronts at the same time and pay attention to developing all three as evenly as conditions permit.
9. Develop international consciousness by linking these campaigns to struggles here and around the world. Use ~~the campaigns~~ <sup>as a basis</sup> to expose US imperialism abroad. <sup>or fighting</sup>

The campaigns all have specific demands. The VA and unemployment campaigns have been discussed and adopted in Action Committee meetings, the Campaign against the Military will be discussed in the next two Action Committee meetings.

#### CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE VA

1. No more red tape and harrassment. End military-type control over benefits.
2. Single-type discharge for all vets. Full VA benefits for all vets.

-4- JAN. 1975

1. No more red tape and harrassment. End military-type control over benefits.
2. Single-type discharge for all vets. Full VA benefits for all vets.
3. Decent care and full staff at VA hospitals. Right to a choice of physician and medical services at government expense. Gynecological and other services for women vets at all VA hospitals.
4. Education and job training for all vets. Raise and extend the GI Bill.
5. No more racial and national discrimination.
6. No military recruiters at the VA. Kick out the American Legion, VFW and other reactionary veterans organisations.
7. Drug free programs and the right to detox on demand.
8. The right to strike and decent wages for VA employees. No cutbacks and layoffs.

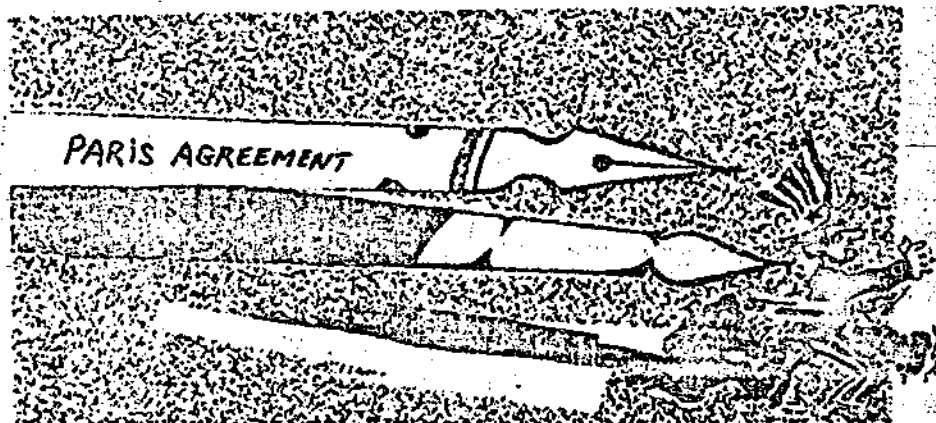
#### CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

1. Jobs from industry or government.
2. Income during all periods of unemployment to cover the cost of living.
3. Benefits while on strike or lockout.
4. End to job discrimination in public and private employment against vets with less-than-honorable discharges and bad SPN numbers. Single-type discharge for all vets.
5. Veterans and other workers hired under federal programs (EEA, VRA, CETA, WREP) should have the same benefits and opportunities as other workers in comparable jobs.
6. Immediate emergency economic assistance for those vets in need of it. End elaborate screening procedures.
7. No military files should ever be made available to employers, public or private.

#### CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MILITARY (STEERING COMMITTEE PROPOSAL)

1. Universal unconditional amnesty for all war resisters.
2. Single-type discharge for all vets, with no SPN codes or other identifying codes on discharge papers.
3. Implement the Peace Agreement. End all aid to Thieu and Lon Nol.
4. No National Guard or GI's to be used as strike breakers or riot cops.
5. No recruiters on campus.

The specific tactics for implementing these campaigns will also be discussed in upcoming Action Committee meetings.



# THE NEW Bull! GI BILL

The GI Bill has been raised - now vets going to school got it made, right? WRONG! Now the self-appointed vets "leaders" in Congress can sit back and rest on their laurels for awhile, right? WRONG! We say: the new GI Bill is not enough!

In 1973 a study by the Educational Testing Service found that the average student vet with a wife and kids came up \$2000 short trying to survive and go to school on the GI Bill. Now these vets will get \$60 more per month - while inflation is going up at 12%. Figure it out! The "new" GI Bill also extends eligibility from 36 to 45 months. But after 18 months vets get 48 months plus full school costs, including tuition, fees, books and supplies, paid directly to the veteran. You don't have to be a mathematician to figure we're getting screwed and we can't live and go to school on \$270 a month!

"Share the burden and the misery" is Ford's way of telling us what the ruling class thinks of vets. While they toss us a few crumbs with one hand they take more away with their other hand. Ford is cutting \$1.1 billion from the VA budget while he continues to send \$1.6 billion to South Vietnam and Cambodia to support the corrupt dictatorships of Thieu and Lon Nol. Congress recently cut the Disabled Veterans Rehabilitation Program and is pushing for a tax on disability benefits. Meanwhile the City of New York is cutting \$30 million from the CUNY budget - hurting all students - vets included. All this makes it harder to get our education and survive, as inflation gets higher and job layoffs increase.

VVAW/WSO sees these cutbacks are aimed at poor and working people, trying to make us pay for the inability of the present system to give people a decent living.

The military budget has been left virtually intact, the multi-national corporations are scrambling all over the world making profits while peoples needs are being ignored. The growing militancy of the under-developed nations (like Vietnam and Cambodia) is stopping the US Government and their corporate bosses from exploiting them. At home this makes it more and more difficult for the corporations and the Government to mask the glaring contradictions that have stood so long between big business and all poor and working people. We work harder for less and less, they cut our budgets and make more profits, all the while trying to convince us that its in our interests to fight the Arabs for oil. What can we do?

History has taught us that as individuals standing alone we can do little, but it is a fact of life that a people united can never be defeated. Just as in 1932 when 25,000 vets went to Washington to demand their benefits and expose the governments lies, we must organize as veterans to fight for our rights. We must link up with all poor and working people to fight for decent jobs and meaningful education.

Vets on campus are in a good position to join together with each other in vets clubs and with other groups, and by broad and active participation put some teeth in these organizations. To help accomplish this, VVAW/WSO will give our assistance and resources whenever possible. In addition, we welcome anyone interested in checking us out further to call, write or come by our office. We have a new members meeting on Jan. 13th at 7:30PM at our office and you are invited to come down. The time for us all to link up our struggles is now!

VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR /  
WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION



135 WEST 4TH STREET, N.Y., N.Y.  
(212) 473-3635

(NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER)

# STOP KILLER COPS

**SOLIDARITY NIGHT**  
**Wed. Dec. 18 8:30 PM**  
**Place: 21 Second Ave.**

COPS KILL AGAIN : 'Tito' Perez, killed by 25th Precinct cops this past Dec. 1 (after arrest for "creating a disturbance" on the subway) is the latest in a too-long series of racist murders by The Cowards In Blue. Claude Reese, Clifford Glover and Tyrone Guyton are known...thousands of others on streets and in prisons have died without the outside world knowing. People have had enough ! Police repression must be exposed & stopped along with the system it serves.

Join us on Dec. 18th at our monthly Solidarity Night to listen to speakers and discuss the problem. There is no admission charge and refreshments are available. Its held at The Peoples Warehouse, 21 Second Ave. (take the 'F' train to the 2nd Ave. stop)

**SPEAKERS REPRESENTING:**

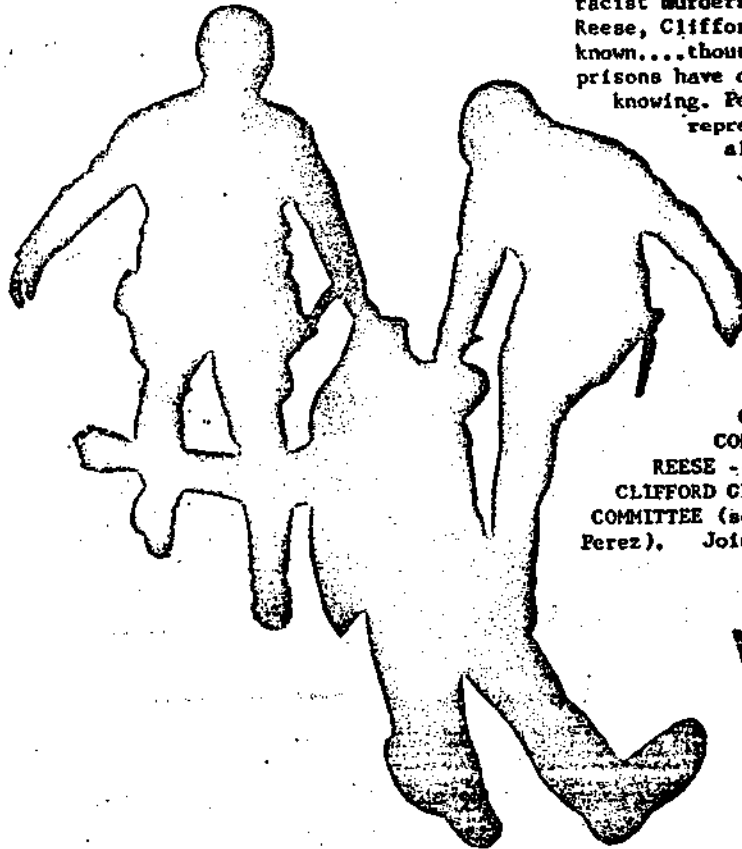
CONGRESS OF AFRICAN PEOPLE ---

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE FOR CLAUDE

REESE --- COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE FOR

CLIFFORD GLOVER --- THE DECEMBER 4TH

COMMITTEE (set up after the murder of 'Tito' Perez). Join us !



**VIETNAM VETERANS  
AGAINST THE WAR  
WINTER SOLDIER  
ORGANIZATION**

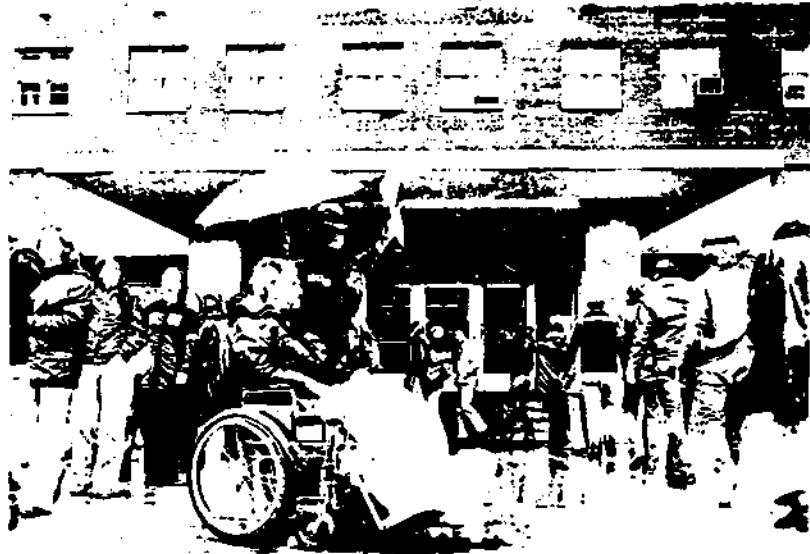
NYC CHAPTER, 135 WEST 4TH ST, NY, NY. 10012

(212) 473-3636



**STOP ALL CUTBACKS  
DECENT BENEFITS  
FOR ALL VETS  
PICKET LINE &  
PRESS CONFERENCE  
VA HOSPITAL -  
47 th w. national ave.**

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**they say cutback»  
we say fight back**

**DEMONSTRATE  
DEC 18~ AT  
HIGH NOON  
for rides and more info  
VVAW/WSO  
2532 n. holton  
264-0882  
milw. wis.**



# UNITE AND FIGHT

THREE WEEKS AGO THE GOVERNMENT RELEASED THE RESULTS OF AN INVESTIGATION INTO CONDITIONS OF THE VA HOSPITAL SYSTEM. AN INVESTIGATION THAT STEMMED FROM THE ANGRY PROTESTS OF VETERANS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AGAINST VA TREATMENT OF VETERANS. INVESTIGATIONS SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE EMERGENCY CARE UNITS, THE VA HOSPITALS WERE GENERALLY IN GOOD CONDITION.

WE DO NOT KNOW WHO WAS INTERVIEWED OTHER THAN HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATORS, BUT IF YOU ASK VA PATIENTS OR STAFF THEY WILL TELL YOU THAT OVERALL THE HOSPITALS ARE UNDERSTAFFED TO THE POINT WHERE PATIENTS CANNOT RECEIVE ADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE. YET IN SPITE OF THIS, THE VA IS LAYING OFF TEMPORARY AND PART-TIME STAFF ON A LARGE SCALE AS OF THE FIRST OF THE YEAR. VA HOSPITALS DESPERATELY NEED IMMEDIATE STAFF AND CARE INCREASES, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS CUTTING BACK WHEN VA HOSPITALS ALREADY HAVE THE LOWEST PATIENT TO STAFF RATIOS IN THE COUNTRY. AREAS THAT WILL BE HARDEST HIT ARE THE REHABILITATIVE THERAPY UNITS, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE FULL RECOVERY OF PATIENTS.

THE RECENT G.I. BILL INCREASE HAS RAISED VETERANS BENEFITS 23% - CRUMBS THAT HAVE BEEN DEVoured BY INFLATION. WHEN VETERANS NEED A LIVABLE WAGE WHILE GOING TO SCHOOL IT IS CALLED INFLATIONARY.

FORD ANNOUNCES CUTBACKS FOR POOR, ELDERLY, AND VETS..

FORD VETOES G.I. BILL AND SHOWS HIS TRUE FEELINGS,  
CONGRESS OVER RIDES THE VETO: STILL MORE CRUMBS!!!

OVER 580,000 VETERANS, A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF WHOM ARE THIRD WORLD, ARE NOT EVEN ELIGIBLE FOR THE CRUMBS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CALLS BENEFITS, BECAUSE THEY RECEIVED SO-CALLED LESS THAN HONORABLE DISCHARGES FOR STANDING UP TO THE OPPRESSIVE NATURE OF THE MILITARY. IN INDUSTRY, THIRD WORLD WORKERS ARE "...THE LAST TO BE HIRED, FIRST TO BE FIRED", BUT WHEN INDUSTRY NEEDS THEM TO EXTEND THEIR MARKETS IN COUNTRIES LIKE VIET NAM IT IS MORE LIKE "...FIRST TO BE HIRED, FIRST TO BE FIRED". IN INDUSTRY THE WORKERS HAVE THE POWER IN THE STRIKE, IN UNIFIED MILITANT ACTION TO PROTECT THEIR LIVING STANDARDS. FORCE IS THE ONLY VOICE THAT BUSINESS AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL HEED.

## WHY CUTBACKS NOW?

LIKE ALWAYS WHEN THERE IS AN ECONOMIC CRISIS, WORKING CLASS PEOPLE ARE THE FIRST TO BE STEPPED ON BY THE OPPRESSIVE HEEL OF GOVERNMENT AND THE BIG BUSINESS THAT CONTROLS THE STRINGS. WITH UNEMPLOYMENT NEARING A NATIONAL LEVEL OF 10% - AND INFLATION RISING AT ABOUT 15% - WE ARE TOLD IT IS ALL OUR FAULT BECAUSE WORKING PEOPLES ARE GREEDY FOR WANTING A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING. PRESIDENT FORD IS TELLING US TO "BITE THE BULLET", DIG THRU OUR GARBAGE", AND "WIN"!

FOR THE FIRST TIME IT HAS BEEN PROPOSED THAT VETERANS PENSIONS BE TAXED. WE KNOW THAT WE DID NOT CAUSE INFLATION, BUT THE GOVERNMENT SURE AS HELL IS TRYING TO MAKE THE VETERAN AND ALL WORKING PEOPLE PAY FOR IT.

## THE CUTBACKS MUST STOP!!!

WHETHER IT IS INCREDIBLY UNDERSTAFFED HOSPITALS OR BEING SCREWED OUT OF BENEFITS, THE VA IS BEING EXPOSED AS NOT EXISTING FOR THE DAY TO DAY NEEDS OF THE VETERAN. WE ARE NOT GOING TO WAIT UNTIL VETERANS BENEFITS, PENSIONS, AND HOSPITAL CARE ARE CUT OFF FROM HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS LIKE IN THE NINETEEN THIRTIES!!!

THROUGHOUT HISTORY VETERANS HAVE HAD TO UNITE TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST ATTACKS ON THEIR LIVING STANDARDS AS WORKING PEOPLE. NOW WE ARE GETTING HIT HARDER THAN EVER AND AS A RESULT WE MUST UNITE AND FIGHT EVEN HARDER. IN UNITY WE HAVE STRENGTH.

WE MUST DEMAND NOT AS INDIVIDUAL FINGERS, BUT AS A UNITED FIST!!

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# stop the cutbacks now

strike down against

VETS DECLARE WAR ON THE VA!

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CORRECTIONS

Page 2 last line \_\_\_\_ at the soonest possible time

Page 3 last line-----careerist that our task was to reach out  
and organize veterans in a revolutionary  
last line

Page 5-----organization. The key link in developing this conscious-  
ness amongst white veterans

Page 7 --- The whole last sentence to the Criticism of Winter  
Soldier is left off. It reads: This means that Winter Soldier must  
stop hedging and take up the task now.

## INTRODUCTION.....V.A. CAMPAIGN

For over a year, a number of VVAW/WSO chapters have been focusing their work on the Veterans Administration (VA) and building a "war on the VA". Summing up the strengths and weaknesses of this work is important in order to move forward, consolidate gains and intensify the struggle against the system of which the VA is a part.

~~.....~~

Because of the economic and political crisis of the system, the potential for unleashing the anger of veterans into a revolutionary storm is growing daily. Veterans are being squeezed hard by the layoffs and cutbacks the system is putting out. Veterans from the oppressed nationalities face an even more devastating situation, with 1 out of 4 unemployed. Discrimination and bad discharges have prevented many from getting decent jobs, if any jobs at all.

To a certain extent, this has meant a new spontaneous upsurge of veterans. Recently there were many actions across the country around the GI Bill. Many vets are beginning to look for an organization to lead the fight.

Within VVAW/WSO, this has meant that a two-line struggle has sharpened and become much more critical. One line is to take up the struggle of veterans around the GI Bill, health care, bad discharges, discrimination against veterans from the oppressed nationalities, and unemployment and through this struggle, turn 'fighters for one into fights for all!' The task of uniting with the day to day struggles of vets and linking them with the overall anti-imperialist movement is seen as key to developing the revolutionary consciousness of vets and to building a powerful United Front against Imperialism that can smash the system.

The other line has a number of forms. One is that we must take up everything all at once in order to be revolutionary. Because nothing is really concentrated on, nothing is ever really done. As smaller numbers of people hold to a position that essentially boils down to having little faith in the ability of vets or the majority of the American people, led by the working class and its party, to make revolution. The CPUSA puts this forward in some very thinly disguised positions.

One of the weaknesses in this two-line struggle within VVAW/WSO has been that it has tended to be a little abstract, that is, separated from practice. This has been especially true since the summer demonstration in D.C. We hope this article will show what it means in practice to build a veterans' movement and link it to the overall anti-imperialist movement.

### "WAR ON THE VA"

Over the past 4 months, here in Wisconsin, we have developed and expanded our knowledge of building VVAW/WSO into a strong revolutionary veterans' organization; one that speaks and acts on the needs of veterans and links their struggle with other struggles directed against the imperialist system. As the crisis of imperialism deepens, veterans, along with other sections of the American people face worsening conditions.

Cutbacks and layoffs are two of the system's vehicles to shift the burden of its present economic crisis onto all Americans' backs. As Big Business tries to minimize the toll of recession and inflation to hold back the depression. But their worming around just leads them into more trouble. They continue to produce more goods that are profitable for them, rather than essential items that people need to survive. They are forced by their own system to produce more and more through forced speed-ups of the workers and wage freezes. To top it off workers can't even afford to buy the very products they produce. This traps the imperialists in a situation of overproduction of goods with no one to buy them. This leaves them without making any profit on their investment. This leads to the collapse of production into depression. Their only course of action is to intensify layoffs and cutbacks in health, education and welfare to hold back this process for awhile. So once again this means that the system is using vets as cannon fodder in a deepening war against the crisis that the system itself has created. This lays the basis for World War

.....

is using vets as cannon fodder in a deepening war against the system that the system itself has created. This lays the basis for world war to redivide the world markets between the imperialist powers. This danger exists particularly in the Mideast.

Given this situation, it's vital that VVAW/WSO seize the opportunity to intensify the "war on the VA" throughout the nation. That's what we're trying to do here in Milwaukee.

We've developed four areas of struggle: 1) the VA hospital; 2) the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; 3) Milwaukee Area Technical College; and recently 4) the unemployment office. We'd like to focus in on our work at the hospital in order that the entire revolutionary movement may benefit from our mistakes and successes and move toward building a strong revolutionary veterans' organization.

The work at the VA has taken a year to reach the point where we are now making breakthroughs. This process was aided by a basic correction in our way of approaching the task of organizing vets. We had the attitude that one-shot demonstrations would spontaneously bring vets into struggle against the VA. These demonstrations were a progressive step in mobilizing the advanced vets to the war on the VA but were not the key toward taking the struggle to the masses as a whole. Patient consistent work is the answer. The correct method is to investigate what the concerns of the people are, what they are ready to move on and then to advance by involving them in struggle around those issues and play an active role in leading and summing up the struggle, and pointing the road forward to the fight against the whole system. Part of this realization was understanding that VVAW/WSO had to go out to the people instead of waiting for the people to come to us.

Since September, we started to concentrate our work on one floor of the hospital. We had one contact there at the time. We scheduled visits each week which included distribution of WINTER SOLDIER (now about 200 a month), current leaflets, individual discussions with people and discussion of the work of VVAW/WSO and the war on the VA. Out of this work we were able to gain a perspective where people were at and how to move forward in struggle. To date, four patients have joined VVAW/WSO and are playing an active role in leading the work there and further deepening the struggle within the VA. Distribution of WINTER SOLDIER is done by them through a network that includes not only patients but employees at the hospital. Building for other struggles such as a campaign against police repression and work supporting the miners' strike have also been done with some success.

The VA is increasingly becoming a hotbed of action and resistance. The recent cutbacks in staff, medical care and the proposal to tax pension benefits all promise more struggle. These cutbacks come in spite of already understaffed hospitals and inadequate treatment including psycho-surgery and drug experimentation on patients. The 23% increase in the GI Bill can only be seen as a crumb tossed to veterans by politicians seeking favor with veterans.

Members of VVAW/WSO and our contacts out at the hospital are using a petition and leaflets as tools, talking to vets about this situation, and mass support has been the response everywhere, from WW2 vets to Vietnam vets. We've summed up that the people want to move the struggle forward at this time with direct action. An action is being called for Dec. 18th at the VA Hospital. We intend to set up a meeting with the local union to see if we can deepen the struggle and broaden our base of support.

We see the war on the VA as key to unfold the 3 other demands of the national program: universal unconditional amnesty; single type discharge and the implementation of the peace accords. In this way, we can unite the broadest number of vets in struggle against imperialism.

We feel this has a relation to the 2' line struggle within our organization, around what the focus of the organization should be. We believe VVAW/WSO must continue towards having a focus and base among veterans and GI's; this must be reflected in the organization having a fighting program that deals with the day to day needs of veterans and leads them in struggle against the imperialist system. We must also link up the veterans' struggle with other struggles against imperialism.

To us, VVAW/WSO is like a tube open at both ends. It allows for people from varied levels of political consciousness to advance politically through struggle and through the conscious work of revolutionary minded individuals and communists within VVAW/WSO. By doing so we know that we will all be able to strike blows against the system and bury imperialism at the earliest possible time!!!

BUILDING A VETERANS MOVEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN (MILW.)

VVAW/WSO has been doing work at UWM for many years around the war and for approximately 1 year around the VA. In our first period of work around the VA we generally weren't too successful because we didn't realize that there are two opposite factors we had to develop. On the one hand to unite with the vets up at the school, we had to deal with particular issues facing vets in school, however to really broaden vets consciousness we had to make the campaign a national campaign and link it up with all those struggling against the system. Unfortunately, the first period of our work ignored the struggle of vets right at the school and looked at the school as merely a recruiting ground for the overall campaign. This negated that people learned as we all did. That is, people learn the necessity of struggling against the whole system through struggling against a particular aspect of the system. This doesn't happen automatically because all of us have seen the role revolutionaries and communists have played in developing our own consciousness.

We started the work at the school by forming a work team consisting of our two members that went to the school and several members of the chapter who were second shift workers that had the days free to work at the school. Next we contacted Wisconsin Veterans Union (WVU) and set up a small meeting between members of the two organizations. We won WVU to writing and distributing and leafleting jointly which called for vets to come and speak out about their problems and even more importantly to start developing a plan for fighting back. We realized from the beginning that there were two reasons why WVU went along with our idea. Many of their members had an honest desire to fight for decent benefits many of them are reformists not because they are sell outs but because they feel at this time that reformism is the best way to advance. On the other hand there were the veterans pimp, counselors and members of the Trotskyite YSA. They would at certain times unite with us only because they felt they could pimp off the struggle of vets and/or because they felt this was the best way to prove to the system the necessity that they be funded so they could help to suppress the growing vets movement. Experience has taught us that it is critically important to keep both these aspects in mind when dealing with these types of organizations.

We spent a lot of time building for the meeting by going down to the long lines of vets waiting for advance checks. A number of the most interested vets were glad to see that we had taken up the fight against the VA. They felt we had done a good job in exposing the nature of the war and mobilizing people, especially veterans, into action. They hoped for the same in respect to the VA.

The meeting was attended by about thirty people, almost all new faces. We started out with a round robin, everybody in the room rapping about what they saw as the main problems and what they wanted to do about it. VVAW/WSO brought the demands and lessons of the demonstration in Washington D.C. this summer out and lively discussion ensued. During this discussion, YSA attacked us for being ultra-left. In essence, they were saying that we raised too many demands, that the vets could only swallow one thing at a time. In their view, vets couldn't be fighters against the system because they would never be able to see beyond their own immediate demands.

One independent vet raised that we had to take our fight not only to vets but to the people as a whole. Members of the chapter pointed out how this had been done in Washington and the tremendous response we had received. At this point, one vet raised the question of whether we should fight for universal unconditional amnesty. We put forward that we felt we should because it was right to resist the aggression in Indochina. Many of the vets in the room either disagreed or had questions about our position. After the general discussion, we all decided to get down on some concrete plans.

Both immediate and short range plans were discussed. The immediate plans were to go and jam the vet representatives office about all the red tape and absence of advance checks. The long range plan was to have a campout on the library mall to really give us a chance to talk to vets and to let them know that vets were fighting back.

When it was brought up that the school wouldn't give us permission, the answer was an almost unanimous, we'll do it anywhere. Several people, all of them from WVU, volunteered to speak to the administration; not to negotiate with them, but rather to tell them that we would be having the campout and if they wanted to stop us, it would have to be with force. The school administrators replied they wouldn't try to stop us. Their strategy was to try and limit the camp-in and make sure we were stopped in our effort to organize vets.

The school administrators and the WVU careerists wanted the campout to be limited to one tent. Sounds like Washington D.C. all over again. Our position was that we would set up as many tents as we needed. We told the careerist that our task was to reach out and organize veterans in a revolt.

ionary way to fight for decent benefits, not to cater to the school administration or any other representatives of the system. The line of the vets counselors on the VA was that there are good guys and bad guys in the VA and we have to rely on the good guys to get decent benefits.

At a meeting right before the camp-in, the struggle against this reformist no-struggle approach broke into the open. Veteran pimps and Trotskyites attacked us for being left adventurists. The struggle got hot and heavy really quick. We pointed out that we would be left adventurist if what we were doing wasn't in the interests of the vast majority of vets and the American people and if it didn't reflect the particular conditions we faced. But none of that was true. Again, the lessons of the DC action were brought forward. We laid out the struggle in DC the majority of people knew the system was in a crisis and getting weaker while the people were getting stronger and were in a position to do more than kow-tow or negotiate with the system for token reforms. The minority position wanted to put vets on the defensive and hold back.

One independent vet really hit it on the nose when he said these "counselors were more interested in voering their lily white asses and stuffing their pockets with a few few easy bucks than in fighting in the interests of the vets." He went on to point out that in these counselors were negotiating with the city for 3 work study jobs on the campus that they would administer. He said it seemed to him that these pimps were only interested in the camp-out to build their own careers. As the veteran pimps and Trots prepared to run for cover, we called for a vote. The vast majority voted to camp-out and to do what we had to do; to organize vets and move the struggle forward. Almost all the independent vets united with our position and the veteran pimps and trotskyites could be counted on one hand. These rats then decided they wouldn't abide by the majority decision since they couldn't go against their principles. Some principles.

VVAW/WSO and a number of independent veterans went ahead with the camp-out the veteran pimps, trotskyites or the universities permission. On the first night, we had many good raps with night school students who we previously hadn't been able to reach. a... our observations strengthened our belief that we did have a correct approach to building a veterans movement and linking it with the overall struggle against US Imperialism. Veterans don't have to be told that the GI Bill is lousy, that medical care at the VA is lousy, that unemployment is hitting hard. What they have to be shown is that there is a way out, that city hall can be fought.

The next day of the camp-out we planned for a rally at noon and spent the morning building for it through leafleting and roving agitation on the Bull horn. At one point, the security guards approached and said they didn't "mind" if we had a rally, however we wouldn't be able to use amplified sound. We told them to stick it, we would do whatever we thought we had to do. We had the rally, over 250 people attended and a rousing speech was given around the 4 demands, unfolded around decent benefits. After the rally, our campsite was jammed with people wanting to talk and wanting to sign a shit list. The leadership of WVU was seen slinking in the corners.

A week later marine recruiters appeared on campus. A series of actions were planned jointly between VVAW/WSO and the Revolutionary Student Brigade. The actions were good and militant, featuring fights with cops, confrontations with recruiters, however the struggle would have been better and more lessons drawn if we'd involved more students and vets in it's planning and implementation.

This gets into what we feel is the major weakness in our work at UWM. Some people in the chapter have talked for a long time about developing a proletarian style of work. In general, our work has had some aspects of adventurism and defeatism which both deny the fact the masses are the heroes and the makers of history. The adventurist aspects comes forward in people wanting to do exciting things, (VA takeover) solely for the purpose of exciting themselves, or so they can prove to others and to themselves what heavy revolutionaries they are. The defeatism comes from seeing us as a small isolated group of heroes who, although we have the peoples' interest at heart, don't have the support of the people. This has meant that we have had a hard time really developing an ongoing chapter at the school.

A small number of vets have come forward, joined the city chapter and are beginning to see the system as the problem. But overall, the development of "fighters for one into fighters for all" is weak. Failure to follow-up our actions or build them in a really mass way, by uniting all who can be united, has meant we have had some shortcomings.

The strengths of our work have been where we have united in struggle with vets. only in this way have we been able to struggle, move people's consciousness forward and separate honest vets from careerists and veteran pimps.



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October 27th-----Veterans Day

On October 27th the Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW/WSO took action against the reactionary Veteran's Day parade organized by the VFW, American Legion and Amvets.

70 Vietnam vets, supporters and members of the Chicago chapter of VVAW/WSO marched on the sidewalk separated from the main body of the parade by about 20 riot cops and 2 paddy wagons.

Some people in the chapter were uptight about even going to the Veterans day Parade for two reasons; 1) The sponsors of the parade (AMVETS) told us they would call the cops if we came down and tried to have a contingent in the parade and 2) Some people felt we would receive no support in the primarily white working class neighborhood through which the march would wind.

The local bourgeois press tried to make it look as though riot police called out by the reactionary vet organizations were there to protect VVAW/WSO from the white workers. But the response of the people showed this to be a lie.

One young veteran who joined in along the way said, "My father is in the parade driving that tank. He won't like this, but I've got to stand up for my beliefs. I'm with you! I've got a 75% disability when a shell fell on me. Us vets have got to fight for our benefits."

"The people are on your side," said an older worker along the march. "What you're fighting for is in the interests of 90% of the people. When I was in the workers alliance in the 30's we fought for relief and picketed the politicians. I'm a rebel and I support you!"

Because of the response of the people along the march and the fighting spirit of those in the march the cops were limited in their options. At first they weren't going to allow us to march on the sidewalk. They gave up almost immediately on this plan. At the end of the march the cops tried to limit the time and militancy of a speech given by a VVAW/WSO member which attacked the American Legion, VFW and Amvets as fronts for an oppressive exploitative system. This also failed as the vets in the march let the cops know that they weren't going to be able to mess with the speakers without a fight. The speaker never even slowed down as he blasted the parade reviewing stand. The reactionary vet honchos were forced to stand there and be chewed out.

Also joining in the march were a small number of Black veterans from Inner city veterans Council. (ICVC) Up until recently, we've made a number of mistakes in trying to work and build unity with ICVC. First, of all we had an all unity approach with them when their leaders pretty much saw the veterans movement as special interest group--- a group for reforms. Their view of the struggle was pretty much confined to reforms.. Their view of the struggle was pretty much confined to just seeing it as a fight for a piece of pie.

We didn't consciously struggle with them over this view because we unconsciously fell into seeing them as the ticket to building a multi-national organization. When we talked in the chapter about organizing Black veterans we've talked almost exclusively in terms of uniting with ICVC, since ICVC was hemmed in by their narrow view of the struggle they weren't making much progress in organizing Black Veterans. Many Black veterans we've talked to are very suspicious of getting in any pressure group that could be the breeding ground for a new batch of poverty pimps. (This happened with another Black veteran organization a couple of years back that didn't advance after a certain point because the leaders became agents of the government dispensing poverty money)

Since we fell into relying too much on ICVC to organize Black vets we made little progress in becoming a multi-national organization.

Since DC we've begun to make progress by correcting these mistakes although no real breakthroughs have been made. We've found in talking with veterans from oppressed nationalities that they are in agreement with the campaign against the VA.

Also we've found that the demand "Decent benefits for all Vets isn't a demand of just white veterans but is seen by an increasing number of vets from all nationalities as a real battle cry against the system. On the other hand it is important that at the same time we unite with special demands around national oppression and win white veterans to the fight against discrimination. At the VA hospital we've found that Latino vets want the VA to provide Bi-lingual forms and doctors. We've raised this demand and it will continue to. The work at the hospital has brought forward a number of Black veterans who see VVAW/WSO leading the struggle and want to unite with us. We feel it is important that we consciously struggle with these vets to join the chapter without sounding like we're demanding it. If we just want Black veterans to join or want somebody else to organize Black vets we'll never become a multi-national organization.. At the same time it is necessary to fight national oppression and build a multi-national organization.

is through actually struggling and uniting with Black veterans against the system. Otherwise it becomes an internal thing that will degenerate into what Bogachit (medical service project in Bogachita Alabama) and/or some other kind of superficial self-cultivating attempts to "purge white chauvinism" from our souls."

#### UNEMPLOYMENT WORK (SUMUP)

We have just begun to form a workteam at the unemployment office. The potential there is very good for organizing veterans into struggle against the system. The main reason is that vets are some of the last to be hired due to the lack of jobs after returning from the rich man's war, and the lack of jobs that already existed in this country when they left. So as a result, vets are some of the last to be hired and the first to be laid off. Unemployment is a product of a system that's in crisis. It stems from the imperialists' system of production. Monopoly capitalism has to throw people out of work because workers can't even buy the massive excess of products that they have produced. The consciousness of unemployed workers is summed up most appropriately in this quote "what kind of rotten setup is it that has to throw people out of work just to keep itself going?"

We feel that at this time unemployment work is one key area for VVAW/WSO to take up. It's a daily struggle of vets in particular and the American people in general. It's our responsibility to move with decisive action against any and all attacks against vets. Building strong ties from the start with the working class is key. As we know, the government tries to make a distinction between workers and vets. This is done to divide us and make it appear as though vets get a better deal. Petty privileges that range from 5-10 points preference for federal and state jobs is one. Another is the creation of 70,000 so-called new jobs for vets that Ford announced in his vets' day speech. It's our task to combat this, and to point this out to all people, by linking the growing veterans' movement with the whole American working class struggle. The general slogan "Union jobs or income now!" and "We won't scab and we won't starve" are two such slogans that speak for all workers, with no bias for any particular section within the working class. Vets who're unemployed can become fighters against imperialism for they again are first-hand witnesses to a system which has no regard for people, whose only interest is to realize more profits. Vets can be organized around their immediate needs to survive through the struggle of the war on the VA and stand with the working class to fight unemployment, thereby exchanging lessons and linking up our movement with theirs. Both can initially work toward building each other into a strong fist that will be able to deal a solid blow against the system! It's VVAW/WSO's responsibility to do this and raise the consciousness of both in order to raise the struggle to a new level against US imperialism.

Some forms of work we are doing now are leafletting for the Dec. 18 action. We have already won some people to coming to the action. Selling Winter Soldier is a good tool also. We are concentrating on building a workteam of unemployed vets who will assume the main role of work and formulate the necessary and particular demands that we will wage struggle around locally, and develop with others a national strategy. We also urge that VVAW/WSO work and support the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC). They are an honest and progressive organization. We believe that members who work should join and support employed/unemployed committees in their local unions. These are suggestions and as we all develop the work we will be better prepared to deepen our political and organizational ideas and forms for the struggle!

WINTER SOLDIER-----COME IN FROM THE COLD

The Milwaukee chapter of VVAW/WSO has used the Winter Soldier newspaper since its inception with varying degrees of success. Basically the paper has been taken out to the people, particularly vets. It has also been used as internal education for the chapter.

The reason we feel we've had varying degrees of success are for 2 reasons. These reasons are interrelated although they are different. First, because of the strengths and weaknesses of the chapter many times the paper is just not used that effectively. When the struggle isn't in full flurry many times chapter members don't see the need to use the paper to build peoples' consciousness of the system and the need to fight back. Also, there is a tendency not to use the paper even when our activities are at a highpoint to sum up the strengths and weaknesses of the veterans' movement in order to build upon the strengths to overcome our work's weaknesses. The chapter's weaknesses in terms of the paper are related to not consistently seeing the masses as the makers of history & The paper is one tool we can use to reach people.

Now this gets into the second point--content of the paper. For some time many chapter members have criticized the paper for not reporting on what we're doing. To some degree this changed with the centerfold on the DC action and reporting on other struggles of VVAW/WSO. Also, criticisms that the NO raised that the chapters weren't providing enough stuff were valid. Even though this has improved there is still a lot more the chapters, including our own, could be sending in.

But at certain times--and now we're referring to the November issue with unemployment as the front page--the problem returns. This reflects the weaknesses the paper has had fairly consistently. We feel these weaknesses stem directly from the NO's incorrect understanding of what our national newspaper should be and who it should serve.

We felt that the front page and the centerfold should feature the tremendous number of demonstrations, picket lines, rallies etc that took place around Veterans' Day. Instead the NO, after struggling with us still felt that an exposure of unemployment was the key thing to unfold the paper around. We took the paper out to the schools, the VA hospital and to the unemployment offices. The response wasn't as enthusiastic as it was to the DC centerfold. At the unemployment office people would come out after hassling for hours and say to those selling the paper "I know all about unemployment, tell me something I don't know," or "I can read the Milwaukee Journal (local bourgeois newspaper) to find out about unemployment."

The Winter Soldier article was a hell of a lot better than the Journal's. The Journal doesn't try to expose the system, but Winter Soldier still misses the boat in terms of really showing vets how to fight back. Winter Soldier doesn't consistently show vets how to fight back because it doesn't zero in on the struggles that vets are already involved in and that VVAW/WSO is leading in many places. This has to be the starting point for drawing out the political lessons that point the finger at the enemy--US Imperialism.

As the struggle of veterans heats up, as links are made with the growing anti-imperialist movement, it is our job to integrate our understanding of the nature of the system with our practice and experience and even more importantly, with the practice and experience of hundreds of thousands of vets who day by day are fighting back--not to stand aloof from these struggles with exposures isolated from practice.

If we don't integrate theory with practice, especially as the political and economic crisis deepens, we will become like so many observers to the struggle and the masses of vets will move us out of the way. Ultimately, there can be only one reason for not joining the struggle of veterans. Whether it comes out in the form that vets are reactionary bulwarks of the system or a slightly watered down version of this it finally boils down to not seeing that the masses are the makers of history, and in particular not believing that veterans can grasp the necessity to bury the system once and for all.

Finally, it is the job for the leadership of VVAW/WSO to determine what is on the rise--that is, what is moving forward and developing. It's vital that the NO point out to the whole organization those chapters whose work is really moving forward and why.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War/  
Winter Soldier Organization  
1023 Allen Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63104

December 1974

Brothers and Sisters:

Enclosed are two papers for presentation to the 14th National Steering Committee and general circulation in VVAW/WSO.

The first paper is a "working paper" by the chapter here in St. Louis, after several months of intensive study, delineating a tentative position by our chapter on the questions facing our organization with regard to its future. We want to emphasize that this is a working paper putting forth ideas and our practice around which we hope to struggle, grow and change. We do not feel that we have a "line" or that we are part of a two-line struggle. We hope this paper will advance our discussions of the future of VVAW/WSO in a scientific and ~~practical~~ manner.

The second paper concerns the issues of homosexuality and the role of the nuclear family in capitalist society and it is written and presented by Bill Fish, an active member of the St. Louis Chapter. We hope that this, too, will add to the debate around that issue in the organization.

In struggle,

The St. Louis Chapter  
VVAW/WSO

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The debate now occurring in VVAW/WSO about the future of the organization is a good one and a proper one. Unfortunately, this debate has been clouded by the recent influx of (public) members of the Revolutionary Union (RU) in VVAW/WSO and their desire to guide us in a direction consistent with the United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI) strategy that RU has adopted. It was not until the Buffalo MSCM that members of the steering committee began indentifying themselves as members of RU. We propose to examine the UFAI in theory and in practice, and the implications for this organization.

#### I. THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Let us first preface this section by stating that despite the National Office's (NO) disclaimer of the UFAI as a prerequisite to a vets-GI focus, we are not convinced by that disclaimer. First, it is quite clear from the first paper that the adoption of a vets and GI focus stems directly from the concept of VVAW/WSO as a finger in the UFAI fist. Second, the increased presence and interest of RU in VVAW/WSO and its apparent concern that we adopt a vets-GI focus indicate that that organization (RU) continues to view us as a part of their UFAI strategy. Finally, the NO admits that they have not abandoned that strategy themselves. (Clarification Paper (CP), pp. 1,6). Let us examine both papers for what they said.

It is clear from even a cursory reading of the Red Papers (published by RU) that the UFAI is a strategy for socialist revolution. If VVAW/WSO is to consciously or unconsciously become part of that strategy, we believe that the UFAI must be critically analyzed. Unfortunately, both the California Papers (Venice Chapter & California Sub-regional Coordinator--Venice and Snake, respectively) did not deal with the strategy itself but confined themselves to analyzing the objective conditions existing in the U.S. While we agree with both of those papers with regard to their analysis of what the actual conditions are, we are disappointed at their uncritical acceptance of the UFAI strategy. That leaves the NO to claim that a UFAI is still in its infant stages and conditions are not yet appropriate for the formation of an actual organization (although this is ultimately what they have in mind). Thus, at this time, states the NO, we need not accept the vets-GI focus (which in our view can have no objective purpose outside of the UFAI).

We also want to preface our remarks by stating that it is not unity, or the basic idea of unifying as many people as possible, that we object to. To oppose unity would be analogous to passing on the flag. The crux of the UFAI strategy is to unite as many people as possible around a minimum program. It is the history and practice of pushing minimum programs in a united front to which we especially object. The NO lumps together several fingers, each one united around a minimum program, which according to the guiding palm (RU?) are objectively anti-imperialist even if the demands themselves are reformist. Somehow, not exactly explained by either RU or NO, we are expected to turn vets concerned with getting VA checks on time into dedicated revolutionaries. Minimum programs in search of allies lead

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not to class consciousness, not to dedicated revolutionaries, but to coalitions with racists in Boston on the one hand and a strong resistance elsewhere to dealing with racism and sexism on the other, as major divisions preventing a unified working class. (The Venice Paper correctly criticizes the UC Paper for failing to deal with racism and sexism in VVAW/USO).

The situation in Boston is a classic example. RU sees racism in that situation as secondary to the demand for better schools which capitalism refuses to provide. But the demand by whites to end busing (which RU supports) is not for better schools (RU's point of unity) but for whiter schools. The Black people are demanding better education and they understand only too well that money gets spent on schools with white children in them. RU's attempt to unify with those putting forth racist demands seems to lead away from unity with Third World people having a national consciousness. Worse, any unity (assuming it could be achieved) around busing would go no further, as the divisions of those in South Boston are much greater than any superficial unity that might be achieved around the issue of busing.

The UFAI assures, without justification in our view, that revolutionary consciousness can be built from fighting what are essentially reform battles. We believe that only by specifically building working class consciousness, by developing a 'world view', and by involving ourselves in those struggles that further that consciousness will we be able to fulfill the need for a revolutionary force when the opportunity for revolution is greatest. This is the opposite of what the UC proposes. In their original paper (p. 15) one finds this quote: "It is the very nature of a mass organization that there be widely divergent political outlooks. It does not have the political unity to achieve a complete world view, nor should it." (Emphasis supplied). We believe that we should be constantly pushing for a 'world view'. What kind of organization, what kind of revolutionary organization, would we be if that were not one of our goals? Certainly as a mass organization it should not be a requirement to be a part of the organization or to work on its programs, but to rule out the possibility of having a 'world view' leads nowhere, much less to a revolutionary class consciousness. The achievement of such a 'world view' will not come about by osmosis, but only if we want it and then work to accomplish it.

The UFAI assumes that the unity of minimum programs will be stronger than the divergences between the groups "united" when the time comes to challenge state power. The history of the various coalitions built in the US and the proven ability of the UC ruling class to coopt and destroy these coalitions leads us to the opposite conclusion: the divergences will be greater than the unity. A further question arises from RU's assumption that the UFAI will be, and is being, led by the working class; one is forced to wonder, as the Venice Chapter and Snake's paper did, about who the hell they have in mind at this time. With organized labor having organized only 25% of the working force and with organized labor itself being almost uniformly class-collaborationist, what leadership, what unity, what organizations of the working class are they talking about? Is it possible

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What they are talking about RU? Or whatever name RU as a Party calls itself?

Finally, we believe that a strategy derived from anti-imperialist military struggles in China and Viet-Nam and from a 1936 strategy to protect the Soviet Union prior to World War II is not an appropriate strategy given the objective conditions in the US today. Indeed, examining these examples clearly distinguishes them from present conditions in our country. The United Front in Europe (pre World War II) (the Popular Front) was a strategy, not of revolution, but one of defense of the Soviet Union primarily, and as a defense against the rise of facism in the European countries. Thus, communists were bound by the needs of the Soviet Union. They specifically refrained from raising communist, or even socialist, demands (despite parliamentary successes and widespread reforms) for fear of alienating capitalist powers with which the Soviet Union was attempting to ally itself against the German threat to the West. The Popular Front government in France was destroyed when it failed to actively support the worker's government in Spain and when the Popular Front government was unable to prevent growing inflation. Throughout Europe the Popular Front emphasized minimum demands and the fascist threat. The Popular Front in Spain was crushed by fascist intervention and Soviet surges. Except for a brief period in Spain, these "United Fronts" deliberately refrained from pressing demands that could lead to socialist transformation of society. One by one they lost the support and unity which had given them the ability to wage and win parliamentary and other reform struggles.

The United Front in China and Viet-Nam were completely different. There the Chinese were faced with an imperialist occupying power. A broad base of people were united, not around a program for socialism, but rather a military struggle to defeat Japanese Imperialism. In a country 96% peasant, the Chinese communists were calling for "new Democracy", including the promise of land reform. In Viet-Nam, the situation is quite similar: a foreign aggressor, a history of cultural nationalism and a peasant population demanding land reform. Successful revolutions can and have been built from a united front approach applied to these conditions. But certainly no one would suggest that the overall conditions in the US are even remotely similar. In this country, imperialism means the system of monopoly capitalism, not a foreign occupying force.

In summary, we do not share the conviction of the NO and RU that the United Front with minimum demands is an appropriate strategy for the US. We believe that it's continual emphasis on unity, unity, unity leads to consideration of issues of race and sex as "secondary" and something presumably to be dealt with after the revolution. The lack of emphasis on these aspects in the program the NO lays out further demonstrates that the strategy of a vets-CI focus makes sense only if seen in the context of a United Front. If the United Front does not make sense, neither does a vets-CI focus that 'logically' flows from it.

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## II. VETS AND GI FOCUS

The simplistic way the UC "clarifies" what it means by focus in terms of analogies of ducks and bears is insulting and paternalistic. We fully agree with Snake's comments and analysis regarding the primary contradictions facing vets. We agree with both Snake's Paper and the Venice Chapter Paper with regard to the effect of the adoption of a vets and GI focus on the organization.

We agree with those papers that objectively looking at the conditions in the US today, a united front does not exist, except by using the most tortured logic. Certainly, there are many people rebelling against oppressive conditions. But to transform this isolated and, generally, spontaneous resistance into an objective united front (even a baby one), especially one against imperialism, is wishful thinking.

We also agree most particularly with Snake's analysis of the 'primary-secondary' contradictions oppressing veterans. In St. Louis, we cannot think of one veteran who has ever joined our chapter because he or she was oppressed by being a veteran, in the most accepted sense. Most of the veterans have done so because they were anti-war. Those who have remained have done so because of an increased awareness of the imperialism explicit in their experience. They see VVAW/USO as a vehicle for utilizing that experience to fight imperialism, to expose it at every turn and to organize others to fight it. One way we do this is by showing that Viet Nam was not a mistake (contrary to a rumor VVAW had a lot to do with spreading). We are able to show that today's fading economy is imperialism's chickens coming home to roost.

Finally, we agree that the result of the vets-GI focus would be to drive out half of the organization, particularly those members who struggle with us daily on issues of sexism and veteran chauvinism. (We do not perceive much struggle on the issue of racism in VVAW/USO, which is not surprising for a nearly all-white organization.) This is definitely true in St. Louis. For these reasons, we urge our brothers and sisters to carefully examine their own chapters, compare them with what the UC states already exists, compare their experience, and reject a vets and GI focus.

## III. THE FUTURE OF VVAW/USO

One of the things lacking in the California papers is a sufficient statement on their views on the future of the organization. It appears that these papers would continue the general anti-imperialist stance of the organization while taking advantage of our veteran GI base to work with issues in which that base still gives us a basic credibility. With the addition of some thoughts on the context of our GI work, discussed below, we basically agree with that focus. But before going further, we want to emphasize what we mean by base and focus. The issues we outline below, which already compose most or all of our



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present work take advantage of our base but do not necessarily appeal primarily to veterans. Thus, the question seems to present itself posed as to whether one is interested in what is being said or to whom it is being said. The order these issues are discussed does not indicate priority, except that we would like to add that we place very high priority on GI organizing when it is done in the context discussed at the end of this paper.

We believe that our work around amnesty and Indochina are important struggles in the overall battle against imperialism. The former attempts to legitimize the right of people to resist imperialist wars and the latter attempts to support the defeat of imperialism in its rawest form in Indochina. We are given special credibility on both these issues because of our veterans base. Amnesty is regarded as a "slap in the face" to veterans. We can destroy that myth. We can continue to 'shine a light in the ugly face of imperialism' (which is what WSI's are all about), as we have so successfully in the past, by demonstrating the criminal nature of the war. We can demonstrate what we have learned (and how we have learned it) and show that Viet-Nam was not a mistake to be corrected but a deliberate imperialist venture and the natural consequence of a capitalist economy. There is broad sentiment against our involvement in Viet-Nam. While the issue of amnesty is alive we can structure that sentiment into an anti-imperialist sentiment.

We can and should support the struggles of workers as the economy inevitably demands more from them. Our study and our organizing experience and our veteran experience can help show that economic conditions today are directly linked to imperialism (especially in Indochina).

While we are inclined to believe that a successful combination of politics, expertise and financial support has not yet developed to measure the value of its work, we have developed serious reservations in that regard. Our experience indicates that any honest attempt to upgrade discharges takes an inordinate amount of work and financial support in relation to the numbers of people potentially affected. We still believe the discharge system affords an ideal example of the class nature of the military system and the use of the punitive discharge to keep working class people oppressed and divided. However, in the context of millions of veterans and even more millions of workers, whether we should drain our resources so severely to reach a few thousand (who may or may not be recruited as a result) is, in our view an open question. In addition, our experience in the past half a year is that additional numbers of less than honorably discharged vets are seeking upgrades in order to get back into the service because of economic hardship on the outside. The Military Law Project has had recruiters calling in rush orders so they can meet their quota.

There is no question in our mind about GI organizing. We should be doing GI organizing on all levels: active duty, reservists and National Guard. This organizing should not be done around broad slogans (as MO and RU propose) but rather around issues which will raise the class consciousness of these

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within the military. That the military is the armed protector of the state is well understood. But who controls the state? The class nature of the state must be emphasized. Thus, rebellions against the existing order such as the ghetto riots, the strike of independent truckers, threaten the interests of the propertied classes and their interests alone. And what clearer example of imperialist war than Indochina? Objectively, no other class but the capitalists could gain economic or political benefits from the subjugation of that area of the world.

We need to raise class consciousness so that the ruling class may not count on its army to fight wars of imperialism; so that it may not count on its army to crush strikes and protect scabs; and ultimately so that it will identify with its own class, the working class, when that class inevitably raises questions of state power. This work should be done with a socialist (working class) perspective. It should be done in unity with, not in opposition to, the rest of the GI movement. It should be done among active duty GI's, reservists, and National Guard. We are well equipped to do the work because of our veteran and GI base and because our level of political understanding and experience has made us aware of the importance of the armed forces to the continued survival of the ruling class and capitalist oppression.

Because of the importance which we attach to this issue, members of our chapter who have been doing GI organizing for several years have prepared a more detailed analysis and program for GI organizing within VVAW/USO, and the GI movement in general, which we hope will add to the tone and level of political discussion in our organization today. We urge you to read it and discuss it.

MEMBER OF SUBJECT ORGANIZATION

WE ARE ALL OUTLAWS IN THE EYES OF AFRICA

By

Bill Gish, WAM/NSO, St. Louis, <sup>NY</sup>Mo.

The nations young people are being lost to a freaking fag revolution. Bobby Seale was the only one (of the Chicago-3) I dont think was a fag.

- U.S. Attorney Thomas A. Foran

Why support political prisoners? Exiled war resisters?

Blacks and Chicanos? The women's movement? To ask these questions is absurd. Why not support the gay liberation movement?

Past struggle over this issue, and the emotional, unprincipled response it has provoked, has made it clear that at least a tentative analysis of good anti-imperialist arguments for such support is necessary. In constructing such an argument it will be necessary to show that the nuclear family, patriarchy, capitalism, and the repression of both women and homosexuals are inextricably bound.

In her book Sexual Politics, Kate Millet (1969, p157), in commenting on the failure of the first feminist movement, states that "a completed sexual revolution would have entailed, even necessitated, the end of the patriarchal order through the abolition of its ideology as it functions through a differential socialization of the sexes in the areas of status, temperament, and role." Some of us may need to be reminded that much of the womens movement today is talking about, indeed building a revolution of the sweeping proportions Millet suggests. Of course Millet goes on to exhaustively analyse much of current literature as it reflects sexual politics. Her concluding chapter concerns the work of Jean Genet, whose primary literary focus was homosexuality. In a short <sup>No Loc.</sup> postscript to the book

(1969, p362-363) Millet explains that "Genet's homosexual analysis of sexual politics was chosen not only for the insights it affords into the arbitrary status content of sexual role, but because it was against the taboo of homosexuality that (Norman) Mailer's counterrevolutionary ardor has hurled its last force." If people like Norman Mailer recognize the tie between their defence of patriarchy and the established order, and the threat of homosexuality, why cannot revolutionaries see as much?

In William Goode's World Revolution and Family Patterns (1963) the author discusses the "fit" of the modern conjugal family and the industrial system. By "conjugal family" he means what I have referred to as the nuclear family, the father mother and their biological children, without the extended kinship ties of the past. Goode points out that "in the modern industrial system, the middle and upper strata are by definition more 'successful' in the obvious sense that they own it, dominate it, occupy its highest positions and direct its future...paradoxically their kin patterns are in fact less close to the ideal typical form of the conjugal family than is the behavior of the lower strata. The lower strata family pattern is indeed more 'integrated' with the industrial system, but mainly in the sense that the individual is forced to enter its labor market."

Friedrich Engels, in his On the Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1884) argued that "the first

class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male." He goes on to point out " modern society is composed of molecules in the form of monogamous families." Kate Millet observes that "Engels was heresy in his age (by advocating the abolition of the monogamous family) these many decades after he is heresy still. But revolution is always heresy, perhaps sexual revolution most of all."

As for the practice of Engels' early disciples, during the first two decades of Soviet power the communists, according to Lenin's observation that " we are seriously carrying out the demand in our program for the transference of the economic and educational functions of the separate household to society," did much to liberate the Russian woman, which Engels had stated "demands the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society." Suffice it to say that Stalin undid most of that program, and in the manner of patriarchal, authoritarian despots from time immemorial proceeded to glorify the family by such measures as declaring abortions illegal, conferring decorations on those having five or more children, and strictly regulating laws on marriage and divorce. The velvet chain of marriage and family was reformed. That original Leninist programme had also included repeal of anti-homosexual legislation, but these laws were also reintroduced in 1934, and the line that homosexuality is

a "bourgeois degeneracy" was promulgated. Even so, legal prohibitions do not exist in Czechoslovakia, Poland, or East Germany.

But I would be a fool to suggest that Marx, or Engels, or any other "heavy" took a clear stand for gay rights. Quite possibly the opposite is the case. I will dare to assert that our duty as Marxist-Leninists is no slavish adherence to the conclusions of a set of deified ancestors. Ancestor worship may be safe and easy, dialectical materialism is a living tool, and not some long lost magic formula. All hail the basic contradiction between the social nature of production, and private ownership of the means of production, but I hope to convince you of a contradiction between capitalist ruling class interest in the repression of our sexuality, and the possibility of a world free of prescriptive sexual role.

Wilhelm Reich, in The Mass Psychology of Fascism (1946, p80) stated that "since authoritarian society reproduces itself in the structure of the masses by means of the authoritarian family, it follows that political reaction must defend the authoritarian family as the basis of the state, of culture, and civilization." And fascists from Hitler to Nixon have defended the family in that fashion. In Nazi Germany glorification of the family was a national cult. Minister of propaganda, Joseph ~~Goebbels~~ <sup>GERMANY</sup> stated that "the outstanding and highest calling of woman is always that of wife and mother." Feminist organizations, homosexuals in the military or elsewhere and the sale of contraceptives, were ruthlessly suppressed. In America, Richard Nixon, in just one example, vetoed a bill

established an extensive system of comprehen-  
sors. Nixon directly cited his concern that  
could threaten the family structure. The fact  
benefit a sizable majority of Americans, women  
is not important.

ity is ultimately opposed on the identical  
is a threat to the patriarchal family. As was  
article in Rough Times by Phil Brown (vol.2,no.4),  
authoritarian family and society, homosexual-

er political question: the night of the long  
into the seemingly placid days of the bour-  
days bear the hardest brunt of the state's

On the theory that you can learn a lot from  
are and why they oppose you, consider why

pose homosexuality. To whom does it pose a  
homosexual rape a real threat? Is homosexual-

Does homosexuality, or rather the freedom of  
ies, threaten the foundation of class society

o family? The answer to the last question

In an article entitled "Sisterlove is  
(1971) states "we are lesbians. To us a

o, defines herself by her own individual  
y, sexually, materially, and spiritually.

reat to male society's definition of women."

that male society's definition of women

only ruling class interests!

In "Women: the longest Revolution," an article intended as a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the women's movement, Juliet Mitchell (1969) discusses the family, and concludes that "there is absolutely no reason why there should be only one legitimized form and a multitude of unlegitimized experience. Socialism should properly mean not the abolition of the family, but the diversification of the socially acknowledged relationships which are today forcibly and rigidly compressed into it. This would mean a plural range of institutions...which matched the free invention and variety of men and women." Shouldn't homosexuality, as part of that "free invention and variety" of ~~women's~~ <sup>men,</sup> be part of that longed for plural range of institutions?

A word should be said about the argument that homosexuality is 'unnatural.' Clellan Ford and Frank Beach are foremost experts in the field of human sexual behavior. They discuss the incidence of homosexual behavior in humans and other primates and conclude that:

it seems probable that all men and women possess an inherited capacity for erotic responsiveness to a wide range of stimuli...human homosexuality is not basically a product of hormonal imbalance or 'perverted' heredity. It is the product of the fundamental mammalian heritage of general sexual responsiveness as modified under the impact of experience.

Homosexuality will not "wither away" under socialism. It does not represent a refusal to struggle with the contradictions between men and women. Indeed many homosexuals have spent the better part of a lifetime married and struggling with those contradictions, and it was only the contradiction within them-



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selves between their sexuality and the prescribed role ordained for them by society that ultimately led to the end of those relationships. As one gay militant put it, maybe it would help if every homosexual suddenly turned purple. Then we could see that homosexuals are our brothers and sisters in the struggle!

In the interest of brevity this paper has neglected certain other arguments. For example, no mention was made of the role of attitudes toward homosexuality within the military. The only thing worse than a "cock sucker" that a sergeant could call you was "pussy" thus neatly illustrating the shared status of women and homosexuals in patriarchal society. Both implied that you were less than a man, and it is my shame to admit that we shared with the sergeant the belief that a "man" was the only thing one would choose to be.

I would like to include a long quote from Kate Millet (1969, p363) which might serve as a new manifesto of our demands:

As the largest alienated element in our society, and because of their numbers, passion, and length of oppression, its largest revolutionary base, women might come to play a leadership part in social revolution, quite unknown before in history. The changes in fundamental values such coalition of expropriated groups - blacks, youth, women, the poor - would seek are especially pertinent to realizing not only sexual revolution, but a gathering impetus toward freedom from rank or prescriptive role, sexual or otherwise. For to actually change the quality of life is to transform personality, and this cannot be done without freeing humanity from the tyranny of sexual-social category and conformity to sexual stereotype - as well as abolishing racial caste and economic class.

To which I would only add that homosexuals are a potentially progressive part of such a coalition of expropriated groups.

Surely, we who claim to be self-conscious revolutionaries want to do more than play some historical role in resolving the great dialectical contradiction of our time. We ought also to be about the business of building the new woman and the new man to people our brave new world. We have learned to take our first halting steps toward dealing with the sexism and racism which seem to have been instilled (along with our first dose of DDT) with mother's milk. The great Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, <sup>ITALY</sup> coined the term "hegemonic" to describe a system where one concept of reality is diffused throughout society, so that the dominant class is supported by norms and perceptions that have been internalized by all classes. The so-called Protestant Ethic of Amerika's ruling class would certainly seem to fit this definition. It has plagued us with the curses of racism, sexism, respect for patriarchal authority, and sexual inhibition which characterize all classes of Amerikan society but which serve only ruling class interests. Most of us now see that racism serves the ruling class. Many of us realize the class interest of the oppression of women. Few of us can see the inherent class interest of sexual inhibition and prescriptive sex roles. The entire thrust of this paper has been to establish that connection. I'd like to end with a quote I almost plagiarized, I would like so much to have been the one who said it. In his book Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation, Dennis Altman states what we should all recognize as a simple truth, <sup>S.O.C.</sup> "no full human liberation is possible without embracing all the potential for human love."

**DRAFT**  
**PROGRAM-PROPOSAL--**  
**VVAW-WSO G.I. ORGANIZING**



A WORKING PAPER PRESENTED TO THE ST. LOUIS NSCM  
BY THE VVAW/WSO GI ORGANIZER'S WORKSHOP: Thanksgiving  
Weekend, 1974.



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VII. CAMPAIGN PROPOSAL

## PREFACE

At the VVAW/WSO GI organizers' workshop held in Chicago over Thanksgiving weekend, 1974, a program proposal for VVAW/WSO's GI organizing was discussed and passed by a majority of the participants in the workshop. (The 3 participants in this workshop that did not agree to the proposal that follows were all from the St Louis chapter and will be writing up a separate minority proposal). The following is a draft of the program that was discussed and agreed to by the workshop. It is not meant to be the final version of the draft program but only what it is labelled: a working paper.

Given time considerations and prior workload commitments, it was simply impossible to develop the proposal as originally discussed at the Chicago GI workshop in time for presentation to the St Louis NSCM. Many of the sections contained here are very sketchy and are really only carried in outline form. Others may still have errors that will need correction, points that need clarification, expansion, etc. These changes or additions to the draft proposal will not be able to be made until after the NSCM but we felt it necessary to have this draft program on hand in St Louis, however incomplete and lacking it may be, to base our discussions on. We feel that this paper does provide a very solid basis for discussion of our organizational program for GI organizing and is in broad terms the basis for the program the organization should ultimately adopt.

Finally, in terms of the general reference framework within which this program was developed we feel that the following points should be made concerning its intended scope:

1. We believe that the GI movement as a whole is not yet at the point where it has had sufficient practice and experience necessary to lay out a strictly focused or specific program of action. We feel that, relative to many other areas of the peoples' movement, the GI movement still is in a comparatively primitive stage. Until there has been much more extensive and more widespread practice there is simply not enough work to base such a more refined or focused program on.
2. Thus, it was felt we should draw up a broad, general program that can be refined in the future as objective conditions change and as we more consistently sum up and analyze our practice.
3. Nonetheless, we do believe that VVAW/WSO has had a great wealth of practice and experience organizationally in GI organizing upon which to draw. Our practice in GI organizing covers the span of a number of years, is in different parts of the country and is with different branches of the service. Additionally, there are many lessons we have been able to learn from the practice and experience of other GI organizing efforts and from our own members who have had extensive experience in GI work with other GI organizing projects. Based on our organizational practice in the GI movement, we fully believe that there is the basis for drawing some very significant conclusions on the nature of GI organizing and outlining programatically a very realistic general program to guide VVAW/WSO future GI organizing.
4. Given these three basic propositions, we believe the program proposal

contained in this paper will make a significant contribution to furthering VVAW/WSO's GI organizing and towards building the anti-imperialist GI movement. It is a program based on actual practice that presents general guidelines and political direction, consistent with the present development of the GI movement, flexible enough to be productively implemented on the local level. Such flexibility is viewed at this point in our work as necessary to discovering through practice what the more overriding principles of GI organizing are.

Submitted to the St Louis NSCM, December 27, 1974:

The VVAW/WSO GI Organizers Workshop  
Chicago, November 29-December 1, 1974

#### GENERAL

#### 1. The World Situation

Today, the world situation is clearly in a period of great turmoil. This is not a bad thing, but a good thing; a sign of the approaching victory of the peoples' struggles all around the world for independence, freedom, and an end to all forms of oppression. If we are to be able to develop a correct program and strategy for GI work, we must understand what the current situation in the world is and what important changes are taking place.

The end of World War II ushered in a new era in the world--the era of the rising tide of national liberation struggles in the vast third world, which have dealt severe blows to the world imperialist system. Huge areas formerly directly under imperialist rule have thrown out the imperialists. The Korean people dealt US imperialism a severe setback; the liberation of China meant that hundreds of millions of people could no longer be exploited by imperialism. The great victory of the Vietnamese people definitely marked the end of US imperialism as the "top dog" in the imperialist world. Struggles of national liberation continue to blaze on all continents; the struggle of the Arabian people for self-determination, and the oil boycott, definitely show that the era in which imperialism could bully the world at will is at an end.

The consequences of these defeats have been very serious for the imperialists. It is precisely the successes of the national liberation movement which have been one of the main factors driving the imperialist system deeper and deeper into what will be the most severe economic crisis it has ever faced.

This deepening economic crisis, which has thrown the two superpowers and all the major capitalist countries into a turmoil, is unlike any other crisis the imperialists have had to contend with. Its unique characteristic is that it combines both economic recession with faltering inflation--high unemployment, layoffs, shortages, with skyrocketing prices.

As in all previous world economic crises, the imperialists have been thrown into a panic, and are searching about for means to save themselves. Inevitably, therefore, they are becoming engaged in a bitter fight among themselves for survival. The first signs of a trade war are already in evidence. In the middle east, in Cyprus,

in other areas, the jockeying of the two superpowers with one another for power and wealth has already led to bloody warfare. Although many "disarmament" and "arms limitation" treaties are signed between the US and the Soviet Union, a new armaments race is just picking up steam. Just as before World War II, when the worldwide depression created the inevitable conditions for a worldwide imperialist war to redivide the spoils, the imperialists today are plotting to find a way out of their mess through war.

There is a real and growing danger of war between the imperialist nations, particularly a war between the US and the Soviet Union. This situation could develop around the crisis in the middle east, with both powers vying for control of the vast oil resources in the area. There is even open talk in the US press about the desirability of an armed intervention in the middle east. And mideast oil is crucial to the struggle in Europe, with NATO and WARSAW PACT forces facing themselves across the German border, represents a huge powderkeg.

The implications of this state of affairs are clear for the GI movement. At the same time as we continue to unfold struggle against repression of national liberation struggles, we must not fail to point out the very real danger of inter-imperialist war, possibly even another world war. We must also be on guard against the possibility of an imperialist country declaring war on a socialist country--such as North Vietnam, North Korea, or China.

Imperialism is approaching its death throes; and this means that in the long run the future of the people is bright. But as imperialism lashes out against the people in its futile attempts to preserve its empire, this does cause the people of the world untold hardships and misery. Today millions of people around the world are starving; poverty is on the upswing, not only in the third world, but within the capitalist countries, the growing crisis is causing tremendous hardships. And imperialist war is the worst horror which imperialism is capable of creating. Each previous world war resulted in unprecedent death and destruction, and left its marks on humanity for for many years. We must do our utmost to prevent any other imperialist wars from being unleashed; but we understand that to do that, we must eliminate imperialism itself, which is the cause of all wars.

Even if the two superpowers do succeed in launching another catastrophic world war, however, this cannot save them from their death. As was pointed out in the beginning, the general situation is excellent for the people; the tide is running strongly in favor of independence, liberation, and revolution. And the role of GIs in opposing and preventing any war of aggression can be a crucial one. During the Vietnam war, one of the factors which led to the defeat of the US was the widespread resistance to the war among active-duty GIs. The existence of a strong anti-imperialist GI movement can be a very powerful material force in the future both in preventing new imperialist adventures, and in turning any imperialist war that is launched into a war against imperialism itself. Both previous World Wars ended in vast new areas of the world falling away from the imperialist system. It is clear that in the future, either the end of imperialism will prevent the next war, or any such war will signal the death of imperialism forever.

## 2: The Situation in the US

As imperialism is defeated worldwide, and as the world imperialist economic crisis deepens, US imperialism is increasingly forced to attempt to place the burden of its crisis on the backs of the American people. This burden is felt by everybody, but most sharply of all by the working class, the class from which the imperialists extract every penny of their wealth. The past few years have seen escalating attacks on the standard of living of the working class, wage cuts, roaring inflation, and now skyrocketing unemployment.

Of course, the working class and the American people as a whole are not sitting idly by while they get ground under. Resistance to these attacks is increasing and as our resistance increases, so does the repression of the ruling class. Police repression is on the increase as people turn to "crime" to solve their economic problems. This is felt particularly hard by Third World people, who overwhelmingly belong to that section of the working class which is the most exploited and oppressed.

The era we are entering into now is characterized by the rapid growth of the revolutionary workers movement--the working class coming forward to lead the American people in the struggle against imperialism. This growing workers movement does not only concern itself with "purely economic" questions, although the fight against economic attacks is very important as the crisis deepens; increasingly, workers are taking up the question of national oppression, the oppression of women, and the struggles of the third world.

There are many examples: dockworkers, both black and white, have united against the importation of coal and chrome from racist Rhodesia and South Africa. Struggles against the abolition of protective legislation for women, and the fight for equality for women on the job and the extension of all benefits to both sexes, has become a major struggle in the workplace in many areas. In Mississippi, black and white pulpwood workers united together in the struggle against oppression, a struggle which attracted nationwide attention and moved forward the cause of unity among the working class.

The Farah strike marks the clearest example, in the recent period, of the growing leadership of the working class in the united front. The Farah strike, a bitter, two-year campaign against the exploitation, racism, and oppression of women in the sweatshops of the southwest, finally ended in victory. This was a struggle which inspired thousands of other workers, and won their concrete support all over the country. It also brought into action many students and other progressive people from other classes, who united behind the Farah strikers and helped to win that struggle. But the leaders of the struggle were the Farah workers themselves--overwhelming Chicano and women. Besides marking a historic victory for the working class as a whole--breaking the solid front of the non-union southwest, and touching off many other organizing drives--the strike served to highlight, for the Chicano national movement, the leading role of the working class within that movement. It also showed that women are capable of leading and winning tremendous struggles, and have taken their place in the front ranks of the struggle.



The most important thing learned through that struggle, as Farah workers themselves pointed out, was that this wasn't just a struggle against one "bad" capitalist, Willie Farah. The strikers found that they had to confront the police, the courts, the media, the federal government, other companies which came to Farah's support--in fact, the whole system. And many workers who supported the Farah strike when they heard about the awful conditions in the Farah plants, realized that they weren't hearing anything new--that they faced exactly the same problems. This is why the Farah movement objectively developed into a revolutionary movement, despite the attempts of the union, the church, and other reformist "leaders" to confine the struggle to the narrowest possible limits.

We go into detail on the Farah strike only to bring out the fact that a revolutionary workers movement is, in fact, taking shape in this country, and that the working class is, in fact, beginning to take the lead in the struggle, not only against its own oppression, but in the struggle against all oppression.

As this struggle develops, we will inevitably be confronted with increasing attempts by the ruling class to smash this growing fight. As in the past, they will resort to the armed force of the state--the military--to accomplish their purpose.

Thus it can be seen that a key task facing the GI movement is to educate GIs about worker's struggles and about the contradiction between the social role of GIs as "special bodies of armed men," to be used to keep the ruling class in power and crush any resistance to its rule--and the objective interests of GIs, who in their origin are predominately working class, and whose fate is bound up with that of the working class.

In order to do this we must understand the changing situation in the US and the significance of the deepening economic crisis domestically.

### 3. The Role of the Military Under Imperialism

Primary in any understanding of the GI movement and of the necessity for building a strong anti-imperialist GI movement, is an understanding of the role that the military plays under imperialism and the special oppression GIs face under it. The military is a primary tool of imperialism, both at home and abroad. Its purpose is to defend by force of arms the property and power of the monopoly capitalist ruling class. It is the arm of the state that provides the imperialists with their ultimate method of control and suppression: armed force. Originally the military developed in response to the need of the ruling classes to suppress the various classes it ruled in its own state. As society developed, the military assumed a second but nonetheless essential purpose--the suppression of other states whose interests conflicted with the ruling class of its own. While the monopoly capitalists, through the US government, have many ways of controlling people in the US and abroad, the military and the threat of the use of the military is their final weapon.

Internationally, we can clearly see how the military has been used overtly in Korea, Vietnam, or as a threat as in the Cuban missile crisis or in the 1973 coup in Chile. In this country, the military has a much "lower profile" but has been used

in the past and will in all likelihood be used again in the future. The military has been used to break strikes on many occasions: the Pullman strike of 1894, the Lawrence Strike of 1912, the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, during the labor struggles of the 1930's, and against the postal workers strike in 1970. The military has also been used to control "civil disturbances"--the Veterans Bonus March of 1932 was broken up by the military under the command of General Douglas MacArthur; the army was used against the urban insurrections in Watts, Detroit, and Newark in 1960's; after the 1968 assassination of Dr Martin Luther King in cities like Chicago, Washington, DC Baltimore and other places, the army, reserves and national guard were all used to suppress insurrections; again in 1968 US Army and National Guardsmen were used to break up anti-war demonstration at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; and more recently, Ohio National Guardsmen killed Kent State students protesting the 1970 invasion of Cambodia by US troops.

In addition to these actions, the military has ongoing programs in communities across the US designed to prepare for possible use in setting up martial law. In Ohio, marine reservists are helping local police departments in their "war on crime" by interviewing citizens, collecting information and directly assisting police in their day-to-day work. Reserve units have been involved in extensive spying activity on US citizens considered "subversive" by the government. CIA Watergate defendant, James McCord, was an officer in just such a unit.

The military as an institution is composed of "special bodies of armed men" whose social role, then, is supporting by force of arms the imperialist state. GIs, as part of this institution of "special bodies of armed men" serve as the actual human element in it (by GIs we are referring to lower-ranking enlisted men and women). While their social role is in fact the suppression of the working class and the maintenance of the property and power of the imperialists, they have at the same time a very basic class contradiction with the military and the imperialist state. GIs, by and large, are from the working class and will largely return to it after military service. But while in the military their social role is in direct opposition to their own class interests. Additionally, GIs must face all the oppression and harassment inherent in military life. To prevent GIs from grasping this contradiction between the social role they serve and their own objective best interests, the military must divide and isolate them from the civilian populations. Aside from the effect of simple physical isolation from the rest of society, the military uses racism and sexism to divide GIs from the civilian population. But even such seemingly minor military policies like the military haircut regulations are all designed to reinforce this isolation; here, by making GIs look physically different from everyone else.

It is precisely this contradiction with imperialism and the imperialist military that must be disclosed to GIs by the anti-imperialist movement: the contradiction between the social role they are forced to serve in the military with their own class interests.

Our task is to build an alliance between GIs and the working class based on this contradiction and unite them in the larger fight against the overall system of imperialism.

#### 4. The Oppression of GIs

As well as the role that the military plays under imperialism, there is also an internal contradiction within the military between the class interests of GIs and the role they are forced into by the class that controls the military. Not only are they used as the human cannon fodder for imperialism's military adventures, such as the war in Indochina, but they are also subjected to a system that degrades and dehumanizes them. GIs are divided from the rest of the working class while in the military and are used to oppress that class both at home and abroad.

The military has to control and isolate GIs so that their indoctrination will be successful and GIs will function as tools of the imperialists. The main method of control used by the military as it is used in civilian society is national oppression and male supremacy. These attitudes are fostered to keep GIs divided from each other so that they will be unable to unite and fight in the class interests of all. Third World GIs and women (GIs and families) face special oppression in the military around issues such as job discrimination, the judicial system, lack of democratic rights, etc. They face this oppression in addition to the ways in which all GIs are oppressed.

Unlike most jobs in civilian society, GIs are prohibited from either striking or quitting; instead, they face heavy repression and harassment from the brass for the slightest sign of resistance to military rule. The main tool of repression that the military uses is the UCMJ. This medieval system of justice includes non-judicial punishment which is used by the brass to hand out punishment for petty offenses virtually at will and unchallenged. The brass continually threatens GIs with court martial and can use court martial to punish GIs through the disciplinary system as well as through bad discharges which stay with a GI as a stigma for the rest of his life. Under the articles of the UCMJ, a GI can be charged with many more offenses than are illegal in civilian society, as well as being charged under Article 134 which is essentially a catch-all for any other charges that the brass might want to bring. What the UCMJ comes down to is that GIs have no rights in the military. All GIs are oppressed by this system whether or not they have consciously opposed the role or the function of the military.

Poor working and living conditions and the lack of democratic rights most directly effect GIs day-to-day. GIs work on unsafe ships, use faulty equipment, live in broken down barracks often without their families, and face a host of other conditions which are totally disruptive and damaging to their lives. As the military moves to support imperialist interests wherever they are threatened, it will continue to be less and less concerned with the conditions faced by GIs. The military is effected by the economic crisis along with civilian society and will have an increasing role in the repression of working people's struggles; thus, it will continue to ignore the needs of its enlisted people. Democratic rights in the military are fewer than in civilian society and the few that do exist are often abridged. GIs can't leaflet on base, hold political meetings, etc. They also don't have the right to quit as they would have with any other job.

These specific ways in which GIs are oppressed in the military provide the concrete basis of their oppression under imperialism. This provides the material basis for organizing GIs to fight back.

### 5. The Need for Building an Anti-Imperialist GI Movement

We have reviewed the world situation, with the deepening capitalist economic crisis and the growing threat of new wars of aggression unleashed by imperialism. We have reviewed the domestic situation, with the rising revolutionary workers movement, the increasingly desperate plight of the imperialists, and the growing threat of the use of armed force against the working class in an attempt to crush these struggles.

We have reviewed the role of the military in class society -- that of "special bodies of armed men" whose function is to protect the property and power of the ruling class -- and we have pointed out that the vast majority of GIs find their own objective interests in sharp contradiction to the social role which they are coerced into performing.

We have reviewed the many forms of oppression which GIs face in the military, which amounts to a special form of oppression, distinct from that of any other class or group in the society.

Through these steps, we conclude that it is both necessary and possible to build a mass, fighting, anti-imperialist GI movement. It is necessary because of the decisive role which GIs can play in determining the outcome of the struggle. It is possible precisely because of the glaring contradiction between GI's objective interests and their social role -- a contradiction which will become more and more clear as the class struggle develops; and because we are basing ourselves on the militant history of struggle and opposition to imperialism which already characterizes the GI movement.

We feel that our organization has an important role to play in building this anti-imperialist GI movement. In sections of the report ahead, we will analyze where the movement is at the present time, and attempt to chart out a program for building that movement.

### 6. The Current Status of the GI Movement

We can characterize the last ten years in the GI movement as being divided into two rough periods -- the period from the initial growth of organized resistance within the military to the war effort to the withdrawal of ground troops and the end of the draft; and the period from that point to the present.

Although there has been a certain amount of spontaneous struggle, some of it very significant, it is clear that the GI movement is just taking its first feeble steps forward after a sickening slide into collapse that began to take form in 1972 and took most of the projects and papers and funding with it before it finally bottomed out.

The fact is, however, that the GI movement is an arising and developing phenomenon again, and we can also explain what caused the slide, and what caused the

born preceding that. This will help us to understand the current status of the GI movement, both as a mass movement and in terms of the organizers.

The GI movement which took off during the sixties was a reflection of the general movement in society against war, and racism. Despite the fact that most GIs never went to college, and that many never graduated from high school, the movement took its ideological leadership from the student movement; and the student movement is where both the strengths and the weaknesses of the GI movement can be traced to. Opposition to the war, and related political issues, became identified in a confused way with "youth culture," "dope culture," and so on; and the mixture of all of these ideas and attitudes, coupled with a strong dose of anti-authoritarianism, produced the predominant "FTA" mentality, which characterized most of the GI movement.

The movement of the FTA days accomplished some very important things and marked a progressive stage in the development of the anti-imperialist GI movement; at the same time, its limitations were severe, and these limitations were not always realized by the organizers. The FTA "line" could lead to sharp increases in struggle, sometimes of a military character; but they could just as easily lead the next day to cynicism, a withdrawal from the problems of the army, a retreat into SOB or AWOL. This highly spontaneous character of the movement, coupled with the transient nature of military personnel and the low level of coordination and summing up of practice within the GI movement as a whole, made it difficult to sum anything up and move forward; many of the projects tended to stay at the same political level year after year.

The FTA line also led inevitably to reformism of the worst type. At the bottom of the idea of "Fuck the Army" is the idea that without the army, your life will be bed of roses. Hence: get out of the Army, or, get out of getting into the Army. This led to the extremely harmful counseling tendency in the GI movement -- projects whose main trip was counseling, who taught GIs that they could remove themselves as individuals from the hassles of military life by relying on experts and bureaucratic paper-shufflers instead of on mass struggle. While counseling in and of self can be a valuable tool, it must be seen as a tactic and cannot be raised to the level of a strategy.

Also, many of the organizers who flocked to the GI movement in 67-69, when projects were busting out all over, were themselves non-veterans and spin-offs from the student movement. These organizers, who did a lot of progressive work, nevertheless managed to inject much of the baggage they carried with them from the petty bourgeoisie into the GIs they were "organizing."

Ideologically, the GI movement failed to develop along with the rest of the anti-imperialist movement in most cases. When the end of U. S. ground involvement in Vietnam came, many of the projects began to flounder, and soon disappeared. But the most stunning blow to the "establishment" GI movement came with the abolition of the draft and the initiation of the all-volunteer army.

The mercenary army historically represents the last stage of decay of a dying military system. We can basically trace three stages in the development of the mili-

tary forces of any society which are a reflection of the strength and development of the society itself. In states which represent arising and developing social forces, armies tend to be volunteer armies -- but not mercenary armies. They are armies which have the support of the masses because they are fighting in the interests of the masses of people, because they correspond to a new stage of social development. This was true in early Rome, when membership in the legions was a sought-after honor, for which every young Roman aspired; it was true of the early stages of knighthood under developing feudalism; it was true of Napoleon's mass armies after the first French revolution; and it is true today of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, the NVA, and other popular armed movements for liberation and revolution around the world.

The second stage, which manifests itself most clearly under the conditions of newly matured imperialism, is that of the mass army based on universal conscription. The mass armies which fought in World War I, for example, were all draftee armies, forced to fight. But although the coercion of the draft was necessary, the imperialists still could rely -- at least at the beginning of the war -- on the masses of troops to carry out the assigned mission.

This was basically the type of army which the U. S. sent to Vietnam.

The third stage, which is symptomatic of the decay and the fading grip of U. S. imperialism, arises out of the realization on the part of the ruling class that their rule is becoming so bankrupt that they can no longer rely on a mass draftee army of short-service conscripts -- as was shown in Vietnam. To continue along those lines could be very dangerous. Thus, they had only one alternative available to them -- to attempt to develop a long-service, mercenary force, which they could isolate from the revolutionary movement of society as a whole, and fashion into a fascist-minded, effective force for the suppression of worker's struggles at home and the conduct of foreign aggression.

The volunteer army has had far-reaching consequences. The number of educated men who used to be drafted despite 2-S deferments, etc, has disappeared. Those coming into the military now are consistently from the poorest sections of society -- what has always been true is now even more true. The number of third world people has skyrocketed. The typical recruit now is young -- seventeen or eighteen -- poor, without a high school diploma and effectively shut out of the job market; at the same time, increasing numbers of prior-service people are rejoining, along with numbers of older jobless individuals.

For a time, the Army was having a lot of trouble meeting its quotas; but as the economic crisis has grown worse, increasing numbers have been forced into joining or rejoining the military. In addition, the economic motivation behind their enlistment has forced many to opt for the combat arms in order to acquire the combat arms bonus (up to \$10,000). Thus, we find that within the combat arms there is an even greater concentration of black and other third world enlistees.

The changing conditions in the New Volunteer Army have wrought sharp changes in the consciousness of the enlistees. Where before, the army was a nightmare that happened to people, now it is a job consciously taken for purely economic considerations in most cases.

This means that GIs no longer possess the old, who-gives-a-shit FTA mentality. Many of them have families to support. Many more are hoping to get job training to prepare them for some kind of job later on. A less-than-honorable discharge does mean something to these enlistees. And some of them are planning to take a burst of twenty years -- for the simple reason that they despair of finding means of livelihood on the outside. In short, the old assumptions about how to organize GIs are no longer valid and need to be discarded.

At the same time, however, organizing GIs in the VOLAR is NOT the same as organizing workers in a factory. The fact is that while most GIs do come from working class backgrounds, many others do not come from working class backgrounds, but from the lumpen-proletariat -- that class which has no relationship to the means of production, does not work, engages in petty crime, etc. And even the majority who do come from the working class are too young -- at seventeen or eighteen -- to have developed any kind of consolidated class outlook. Thus, they are capable of being imprinted with the fascist ideology which the military plans to feed them. And, they are just as capable of embracing revolutionary ideology -- but only if it is brought to them. We know the military will do its job.

The fact is that the GI movement as an organized force has failed to do its job. Confronted by the end of the "good old days," the GI movement as a whole has either flaked out or ignored the fact that the "good old days" are over. Many of the old projects that are still around are STILL either doing primarily counseling work, or are creaking along not doing much of anything. No doubt, much of the responsibility for this is due to the isolation of the GI movement by the rest of the anti-imperialist movement caused either by a failure to understand its crucial importance or simply ignoring it.

The main weakness in the organized GI movement today, then, is political backwardness. The paranoid fear of projects of being "dominated" or "told what to do" has led over a period of years to a consolidation of an astonishing level of primitiveness. The two-line struggle within VVAW/WSO around vets work, for example, which has been raging for months, had no equivalent within GI work until VVAW/WSO convened the GI Conference -- when all hell broke loose.

It is understandable that the mass struggle in the GI movement has not been at a high point the last couple of years. Both the military and the movement were in a period of sharp transition, and the anti-imperialist movement as a whole was at a low ebb. What we must take up now, given the fact that the GI movement is once again increasing in both intensity and importance, is NOT four more years of blind practice culminating in another crash; but a political summation of our past work, and a political perspective and program for the future, a program that will be systematically implemented and systematically summed up and enriched. And it is the responsibility of our own organization to play a major role in that process.

### 7. Tying the GI and Veterans Movement Together.

We see the great importance of building the GI movement in particularly close relationship with the growing anti-imperialist veterans' movement. As an organization, we organize veterans because of our special ability to understand and relate to the peculiar oppression veterans suffer under imperialism. Because of VVAW/WSO's large veteran base, we have this ability. Many of our members were themselves GIs and are now veterans who actually experience the oppression veterans suffer under the system. Our direct involvement with the oppression of veterans has given VVAW/WSO a special sensitivity to these problems and, as a result, a deeper understanding of the actual material basis for them.

In terms of relating the veterans' movement to the GI movement, and of tying our veterans organizing in VVAW/WSO to the work we are doing with organizing GIs, much of this same dynamic again holds true. There is a vitally important social bond between the masses of veterans and GIs in the U. S.; a social bond whose material basis is the common oppression and common understanding of the nature of the imperialist military that grows out of the shared experience of military service. The potential for developing and expanding this social bond holds a great deal of significance for the people's movement in the U. S. There is a very real possibility for initiating mass interaction between GIs and veterans. Interaction that would develop a deeper understanding among GIs and among veterans of the nature of the system, how it is changing and where it is going. An example of how this would work might be in a situation where there was a danger of another imperialist war (as we, in fact, now have) where veterans who fought the last imperialist war in Indochina could bring a deeper understanding of what such a war is all about to young GIs that have not yet experienced one.

The struggles of veterans and the veterans' movement are important to building the anti-imperialist GI movement on a number of other levels. Over and above the prospects for mass interaction of vets and GIs, it is logical for veterans to actively work as organizers in the GI movement. Given vets' personal experience in the military and the understanding of the system they have gained as a result of being in it, vets can and should be actively recruited into the GI movement as a solid base of civilian support for it. And as was elaborated above, given vets' military experience and credibility, they can speak to GIs in a way that few other people in the progressive movement will be able to do.

On the other side of the coin, the vets' movement is important to GIs since they will someday be veterans themselves and will be facing new forms of oppression under the imperialist system. Again, much of this oppression will stem directly from their military service: hassles with the VA over medical benefits or the GI Bill, less-than-honorable discharges with the resulting inability to get any benefits at all or to get a real job, higher rates of unemployment than normal, etc. All this, in addition to the oppression the entire working class experiences: economic attacks, police repression, wars of imperialist aggression, etc. Nor can we overlook the need for a movement that GIs can move directly into as they ETS from the service. In the past, we have seen how a lack of such a "natural" place for progressive GIs to go into after they leave the military has lost many solid people to the anti-imperialist movement. The vets' movement is clearly a logical place for GIs to go after they do ETS.



### III. POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE METHODS OF OUR GI WORK

1. Just as all things in our world are in a constant state of change and motion--so are the conditions affecting the nature of the work we must be doing with GIs. Particularly at this point in time, when the world situation is changing so fast, it is both a necessity and our political responsibility to continually sum up and re-analyze and improve our work. In looking at these changing conditions, and formulating our work for the coming period, it is also important to take into account the changing level of struggle in the US as reflected in the growth of not only anti-imperialist consciousness but many anti-imperialist organizations as well. This growing anti-imperialist movement, increasingly led by the revolutionary workers movement, should affect our whole outlook towards GIs. We should not see our work among GIs, or anyone else for that matter, in isolation from other struggles taking place today in the US and throughout the world. Rather, we should look at GI organizing as one important part of a much larger struggle against US imperialism being led by the working class--a struggle which in itself is part of a worldwide united front against imperialism. Our goal should always be to strive to link these various components of this struggle together. Tendencies to make very narrow formulations of GI work must always be thoroughly combated. In reality such isolation cannot but hold the struggle back.

2. In terms of this vital need to link up the GI movement with the rest of the growing workers movement and the general anti-imperialist movement, we must always be striving to link up every concrete struggle we are engaged in with the overall struggle against imperialism. Whatever the problem we are faced with, whether it is homeporting, hair regulations, or women's medical care in the military, the question of where this struggle leads people is the key to whether this struggle was successful. Without providing an anti-imperialist perspective on local work, and without linking this with the day-to-day struggles GIs are waging, we will be failing to identify the real cause of these problems and, objectively, holding back the struggle. We cannot deal with one "symptom" of imperialism after another without exposing how they are just results or "side effects" of the basic illness. As long as the basic problem remains, the symptoms--wars of aggression, racism, miserable living and working conditions, and so forth--will continue. It is in the very nature of imperialism that this is so. Anti-imperialism must be at the very heart of the GI movement.

3. But by the same token, we cannot make the mistake of seeing "imperialism" as one of a number of issues we have to work around--to equate imperialism with foreign aggression, and to put other struggles in some different category. This is an error VVAW/WSO has made in its work in the past and one we must avoid at all costs in the future. In fact, we are combatting not just certain imperialist POLICIES on the part of the government but the imperialist SYSTEM; and the ruling class that exploits workers in this country is just as imperialist (and is identical to) the ruling class that exploits the third world.

What is the point of this? The point is that the struggles around working and living conditions, democratic rights, against

against the oppression of women, etc., are no less struggles against imperialism than the struggle against imperialism world-wide. The goal of our work must be, not to artificially divide our work into "anti-imperialist" work and "day-to-day" work or "reform" work, but to turn every struggle, every act of resistance, into a fight that will enable the people to see what the real enemy is, and to understand that the solution to our problems, as well as to those of the Vietnamese, Koreans, or South Africans, lies in the abolition of the imperialist system itself.

The practical effect of making an artificial division such as this in our work is to encourage rightism and reformism in our work, and to sort of abstract or cloud struggle around "imperialism" to the point that GIs are not permitted to see the unity between their own struggle and that of the Vietnamese or other oppressed nations around the world. It is sort of a "stage theory" approach to GI work: FIRST GIs should fight around reform struggles in a reformist way, and then, at one day in the future, they would "graduate" to the anti-imperialist struggle. This approach is similar to the rightist approach in trade union work which confines activity to "militant trade unionism" for the masses, and maybe picks out a few "advanced individuals" for study groups or for struggle of an anti-imperialist nature.

What does this mean in practice? Does this mean that we should attempt to form "pure" anti-imperialist organizations, or raise slogans like "smash the imperialist pass system" or "oppose imperialist hair-cuts?" Of course not. The purpose of our politics is not to build walls around ourselves to "keep out" anybody who does not attain our "advanced" anti-imperialist consciousness. The point is that while leading people in struggle against any and every manifestation of oppression, where do we lead them? What do we do with the sparks of consciousness that are generated as the people move into resistance around some issue? Do we throw cold water on them by pushing the ideas that movement "heroes" or lawyers and slow reforms can solve their problems--by pushing this either openly or through our practice? Or do we show the relationship between every manifestation of oppression, in a real and living way, with the whole system of exploitation and oppression called imperialism? In other words, we should take these sparks of consciousness and fan them into flames, to bring the masses of GIs to the understanding that the imperialist ruling class they are supposed to be fighting for is actually the basic problem, that they need to be fought against and destroyed. All of our work must be examined from this standpoint. There are no innately revolutionary issues, nor are there any innately "reformist" issues. Any struggle is potentially a path to a broader revolutionary consciousness--or, we can use that struggle to side-track people down a dead-end road of sterile reformism.

Just as struggles around working and living conditions can be conducted in a revolutionary way, so can we struggle around issues like the war in Indochina in a reformist way--just ask George McGovern. The decisive test of our political line is practice: --what conclusions to GIs draw from the struggles we have helped give leadership to? Do they conclude that they can get what they want through paperwork, or through getting rid of some one pig?

Do they conclude that all struggle is hopeless, and take refuge in dope? Or do they advance through struggle from the position of fighters for one into fighter for all? Do we teach them to rely on "experts"--individual movement heavies who can "do it for them"--or do we teach them to rely on their own strength, the strength of the masses, and to understand the essential weakness of the dying system they are fighting?

The question of building the anti-imperialist GI movement is totally tied to the question of whether we are going to build a reformist or a revolutionary GI movement--and one of the main roadblocks to understanding how to do this has been our lack of understanding of what imperialism really is and HOW TO WAGE struggles against it.

4. Our methods of work in the GI movement, besides providing an anti-imperialist analysis and struggling in a revolutionary and not a reformist way, must be seen from the point of view of conscious leadership--leadership that is continually trying to initiate action to organize GIs to fight back. This is certainly not to say that VVAW/WSO GI organizers should then ignore the spontaneous resistance of GIs that we see cropping up daily. Far from it. Rather, we should always be prepared to go into these struggles and do all possible to broaden and deepen them, constantly striving to inject as much political content into them as possible. But to passively wait for spontaneous action by GIs to occur before we become involved is definitely not leading but tailing behind uncertainty and spontaneity. At times the GI movement has had aspects of such an approach to GI organizing; and, to an extent, still does today. If we are to really see the GI movement move forward in the coming period, however, it is clear that conscious leadership will be a vital necessity.

5. A cardinal principle in all our GI work should be an orientation toward building a FIGHTING GI movement. Above all, VVAW/WSO's GI work must be based on, and its strategy derived from, the understanding that its primary strength is the united, militant, mass action of GIs. If we fail to understand this, fail to understand that it is the people that are the makers of history, instead relying on movement "heroes" or the courts, etc., we will inevitably make major errors in our work and fall into the bog of reformism. However, if we base all our actions on our primary strength, the people, we will be able to win real victories. We will be determining our own initiative rather than continually having to react to the initiative of the military.

6. As the character of the anti-imperialist united front has developed, so has the situation in GI work changed and developed. If our work is to be successful we must have our analysis based on real conditions and must fully understand what these changes mean for our work in organizing GIs. During the anti-war movement of the 1960's, which was predominately led by students, the struggles of GIs by and large drew their political understanding from the student movement. With the victory of the Vietnamese people--in which the anti-war movement and the GI movement played an important part--and the deepening worldwide economic crisis of imperialism, the student movement temporarily died down at the same time as the working class has becoming more and more active, has been lending

more and more inspiration and taking more and more leadership in all of the people's struggles against imperialism. This factor--the developing leadership of the working class in the united front--is a critical one. At the same time, the composition of the military has altered drastically. Where in the past the draft was the main pressure which forced people into the military--thus in many cases providing them with a rebellious FTA attitude from the beginning--at the present time economic necessity is doing the drafting. The numbers of working-class youth, members of oppressed nationalities, etc., is increasing dramatically. The number of women in the military has also increased significantly. But despite certain "improvements" like pay, oppression in the military is actually in many cases more severe than in the sixties and can be expected to grow worse. This is necessary for the ruling class if it is to build an effective, reliable, mercenary force so isolated and brain-washed that it will attack its own people as the revolutionary struggle intensifies. At the same time, the classes which compose the majority of the military objectively have everything to gain by revolution.

Thus a key task confronting us is to bring to the working class consciousness, consciousness of their unity with the working class and all oppressed people in this country, and consciousness of the important role they will be playing in determining the victory of the people's struggle. In doing this, explaining the united front and the leading role of the working class, and building practical and political solidarity between the working class and the working class is crucial.

#### IV. PRIMARY POLITICAL QUESTIONS FACING THE GI MOVEMENT

Over and above the general analysis of the world and domestic situation, the role of the military and the oppression of GIs and questions concerning the nature of the GI movement and its relationship to the veterans movement, there are many specific political questions central to GI organizing that must be addressed. In the section on political perspectives on the methods of our GI work we dealt with some of the broader questions relevant to this. In this section we will address some of the more particular questions arising in GI work that we feel must be clarified and struggled around. It is only through struggle to first reach clarity on exactly what the questions in debate are that we can then move towards scientifically determining what the single best solution to a given question really is. In struggling around these questions in the Thanksgiving GI workshop we did not always reach full or even partial agreement as to what the analysis of a particular question really was. As each question is spoken to, we will try to point out when we did achieve a solid level of unity and where we did not.

##### 1. Separate Organizations And/Or Caucuses

Historically the question of separate organizations or caucuses for women and 3rd World people has always been debated in the progressive movement in the US. In terms of the GI movement, it has come down to a question of whether 3rd World GIs should be organized separately from white GIs, whether servicemen should be organized separately from servicewomen, or GIs from their wives and families. In general terms we feel that there is a high degree of correlation as to how this question in the GI movement relates to the same question in other areas of the anti-imperialist struggle.

##### a. The question of separate organizations and/or caucuses as regards women in our GI work:

At the thanksgiving GI organizers workshop this particular question was debated at some length. Our position held that we should always support the RIGHT of separate women's groups or caucuses to form, but that such separate groups or caucuses represented a weakness and inability of men and women to operate in political harmony within the same anti-imperialist organization. We base this position on the belief that there is a solid material basis for unity between men and women GIs due to their common oppression under the imperialist military. We believe that every effort should be made to resolve problems between the sexes rather than allow a split to develop.

Other participants in the GI workshop, and also at the National GI Conference held in Chicago, Oct 11-14, held that it was necessary for women to have a separate and independent power base and that such a base of power would lead to a quicker resolution of the contradiction between men and women. This position holds that the basis for unity between the sexes is low at this point in time, especially within what are seen as "male-dominated" groups. It holds that separate groups or caucuses are a prerequisite need to force men to struggle against their male chauvinism.

Both positions reached full unity at the workshop on the understanding that it is possible for conditions to deteriorate to such an extent that it would be necessary for enlisted men and women to form a separate group or caucus. The question, however, is when this right should be exercised. We believe that separation can never be an "automatic" and easy solution to solving the problem. We feel that to do so is in fact raising a weakness--divisions in the working class caused by male supremacy--to the level of principle. Naturally, in the initial stages of getting a GI organizing effort off the ground it would be completely correct to begin with a separate women's group if that was necessary to then achieve long run unity at a later point. But to understate the basis for potential unity to the point that we are objectively advocating separation is to raise a weakness to the level of principle and to hold the struggle back. In an existing GI organizing effort with both men and women in it, it may be necessary to form a separate women's caucus should some particularly rank male chauvinism develop. But this must always be done with the goal of utilizing this separate form as a transitional stage to achieving greater unity.

In terms of VVAW/WSO's own history there is a good case lesson in point. In the early days of VVAW, women were not allowed as "real" members of the organization, but were expected to sort of "hang around" in an unofficial VVAW "women's auxiliary." This period of our organizational development was characterized by the most blatant chauvinism and oppression of women. The way women began to successfully combat the situation was NOT by forming a separate caucus; in many ways they had already been formed into one, but by demanding full and equal membership and participation in the organization. It was largely on the basis of women's "officially" entering the organization that real gains against male-chauvinism in VVAW began being made. The point we feel needs to be made here is that there are simply no automatic solutions to the problem: each situation must be analyzed in context with the particulars of time, condition and place. Then, the decision that will best further long run unity between the sexes is the one we should utilize.

b. The question of separate organizations and/or caucuses as regards to 3rd World GIs:

As with the question of separate organizations for women, the question as regards 3rd World GIs must always be analyzed dialectically in terms of time, condition, and place. We believe that racism is the primary factor dividing the working class in the US just as it is the primary factor dividing GIs. Nonetheless, based on the rapidly deepening economic crisis and the resulting attempt by the imperialists to place the burden of this crisis on the backs of the entire multi-national working class, there is a substantial and growing basis for multi-national unity against the common oppressor.

In terms of our GI organizing, we believe at the initial stage national forms of organization, or 3rd World caucuses, can play a very progressive role and should be encouraged. As things progress, however, and if this situation remains frozen at this level this will inevitably begin to move backward. We cannot raise divisions based on national lines in our GI work to the level of principle. When in the short run, national forms of organization will further multi-national unity they should be encouraged. When we can achieve multi-national unity in our GI work we should always do so. This in fact is the goal we should always be working towards.

A good example of a case where a national form of organization furthered the cause of multi-national unity and moved the entire anti-imperialist movement forward was the Black Panther Party in the middle and late 1960's. As a revolutionary black organization it played a crucial role in building the anti-imperialist movement among all nationalities in the US. Its struggle inspired and served as an example of revolutionary minded people throughout the country: blacks, whites, chicanos, American Indians, etc were all moved ahead in their understanding of the imperialist system as a result of the Panthers.

But nothing stays the same--everything in nature is in motion from one point to another. In the case of the Panthers precisely because they failed to advance from revolutionary nationalism to an organization working to build a multi-national anti-imperialist movement and take up the struggles of the entire working class, they inevitably began moving backwards away from the progressive role they had been playing. From a revolutionary organization they have not progressed any further and instead have fallen into bourgeois nationalism and outright reformism. In terms of our GI organizing, there is a lesson to be learned here. Our goal is to build multi-national unity and a multi-national GI movement. If we allow division along race lines to be maintained in our work, and in our organizing, we will be failing to attack the primary pillar of support of the imperialist state and inevitably begin moving backwards ourselves.

In summing up our discussion on this question at the Thanksgiving GI organizers workshop, we reached full unity on a basic statement of our principles regarding separate organizations or caucuses for women or 3rd World GIs.

'Racism and sexism are forms of bourgeois ideology which divide the working class. We see that the material basis of unity for the working class comes from our common oppression under the system of imperialism. This material basis of unity is greater than that ideology which now divides us, and it is that unity which can lead us to overcome those divisions.

The guiding principle of our work is to achieve the greatest possible unity of the working class. That in situations where it is necessary, in the interest of long range unity, to establish separate or autonomous caucuses and/or organizations of women and Third World people as a transitional stage to that long range unity, we see that as a progressive step. In the long run, this means organizational and political unity.

We feel this is a useful formulation to guide us in our GI work and submit it to the organization for adoption as basic unity statement on the question.

### The Role of Third World GIs

A. In the military, national oppression is the primary weapon used by the Brass to divide GIs against each other. Evidence of this can be found everywhere in the military. To mention but a few areas of military life:

a. UCMJ oppression of Third World GIs; the notoriously harsh military justice system is even more oppressive when dealing with national minorities--

\*One example is the usage of Article 15, non-judicial punishment, administered at the discretion of individual unit commanders. A recent DOD task force on the Administration of military justice admitted that "a greater number of black enlisted people receive non-judicial punishment (25.5%) than their proportionate number...."

\*The same study showed that of a sample of 1,471 GIs tried by court martial 34.3% were black.

\* Third World GIs are much more likely to be subjected to pre-trial confinement than white GIs. A full 50% of all Airmen in pre-trial confinement in 1971 were black. The NAACP found 50% of all soldiers in Europe in pre-trial confinement to be black. The DOD task force showed that black detainees were confined an average of 5 days longer than whites, and that whites were twice as likely as black to be released without subsequent disciplinary action.

\*Black GIs form a highly disproportionate percentage of GIs held in military stockades. According to 1971 Department of Justice figures, blacks comprised 30% of those in Army stockades and 53% of those in Air Force prisons. In 1972, blacks represented 47% of the prisoners at Ft Leavenworth, Kansas, and 43% of the men in the 3320th Retraining Group at Lowery AFB, Colorado. Blacks also receive significantly more severe punishments than whites. On the average blacks are confined at hard labor a year longer than whites (2.9 years to 1.9 years) and are considerably more likely than whites to be sentenced to total forfeiture of pay and dishonorable discharge.

\*Less than honorable discharges are given out in disproportionate numbers to black GIs. The stigma of a bad discharge will follow a GI in civilian life and will cut down on his ability to find employment for adequate pay. This discrimination by employers on the basis of discharges affects the Third World GI even more since he is already discriminated against because of nationality. The DoD task force on the Administration of Military Justice reported that of the 1,471 enlistees tried by court martial during the period of the investigation 34.3% were black. Punishments were generally about equal, except for punitive discharges. While 23.4% of the blacks received a bad discharge as part of their sentence, only 16.9% of the whites received this punishment. A NAACP report claims that in Europe blacks receive 45% of all less than honorable discharges. Figures provided by the Congressional Black Caucus for 1970 show that although blacks were only 11.7% of the total Air Force strength, they received 28.9% of the less than honorable discharges.

\*Discrimination hits Third World GIs especially hard since the opportunities



that are open to them in civilian life are limited and thus they have a higher expectation when they enter the military. Although comprising 12.1% of all enlisted people, blacks in 1971 represented 16.3% of those in combat specialties and 19.6% of those in service and supply positions, they held only 4.9% of the jobs in the electronics equipment field. Today, the 82nd Airborne, the Army's primary combat division, is more than 26% black.

\*Third World people are discriminated against on the basis of rank, with blacks being disproportionately assigned to the lowest military grades, E-1 and E-2, and to E-6 (the bottom rung for careerists), and they are under-represented in grades E-4 and E-5 (top first term slots) and in the highest positions, E-8 and E-9. In the Marine Corps, for example, figures for March 1972 show that, although blacks comprised 13% of the enlisted strength, they represented 17.9% of those at E-1, 9.1% of the E-4's, 13.6% of the E-6's, and only 4.4% of those at E-9. Blacks are also excluded from the officer corps. As an example, in July 1974 the percentage of black officers in the Army was only 4.2%.

These statistics represent percentages only for blacks since the DoD does not give separate classifications of Spanish speaking GIs. It is clear that they face the same types of racism in the military that blacks do. They are particularly affected by the military examinations, like the Armed Forces Qualification Test, which is written in English. Spanish-speaking GIs are often classified as being dull and thus shut out of the more exclusive or technical jobs. We don't have the figures for Asian American GIs but experience has shown us that they also face the same treatment as blacks. It is well known, for example, in the Navy, that Philipinos are used most frequently as stewards and cooks. The recent Grace-Kealoha case in Hawaii exposed the racism of the military towards GIs of Hawaiian ancestry.

\*(Our thanks to Dave Cortright whose research enabled us to present the statistics on military racism.) No Loc.

B. Black, Chicano, and other 3rd World GIs have consistently played a key role in developing the struggle inside the military. During the rebellions in the cities in the 1960s, black GIs often refused to go to the communities where they were ordered to help put down the riots. Third World GIs have been in the forefront of the fight against racism and discrimination against the military, and black GIs in Vietnam were among the first to resist the war which they clearly saw as an unjust war against other third world people fighting for freedom.

Because of the national oppression which black and other Third World GIs must face, they may often be the first to move into struggle against the military, particularly around the specific questions of national oppression, but also around other questions as well. They represent a powerful, potentially revolutionary force in the military. And with the new volunteer army, the percentages of black and other Third World GIs are at their highest level in history. This brings out in bold relief the crucial significance of this revolutionary potential for the whole anti-imperialist GI movement,

At the same time, we must oppose the mechanical concept, advanced by some, that in all situations black GIs will take the lead in developing the anti-imperialist struggle, and that the role of whites is confined to that of following and supporting Third World struggles. The fact is that the history of the GI movement shows clearly

that white GIs as well as third World GIs have fought many heroic struggles against military repression, the war, etc. including putting their own freedom and lives on the line. There have been situations in which white GIs have taken the lead in anti-imperialist struggle while the movement among black GIs has been less advanced; and, most important of all, there are numerous examples of black and white GIs fighting together, side-by-side, conscious of the fact that they are facing a common enemy.

To adhere to the mechanical idea, divorced from social practice, that only Third World GIs can be really advanced or can really develop the struggle can only lead to tallism, and to excuses for not doing everything possible to develop the revolutionary struggle. The same goes for the idea that "white GIs can never organize black GIs." On the contrary white GIs, when they initiate struggle, they should make every effort to inform the Black GIs, and attempt to involve them actively in the struggle. Asking for support and suggestions and participation from Black GIs by white GIs builds unity and respect between the nationalities--it is not "racist" or "condescending" chauvinism. The same is true of advanced black GIs--they should attempt to organize and educate white GIs around the struggles they are involved in. This, again, builds unity and breaks down distrust and racist attitudes between the nationalities.

However, multi-national unity can never be built unless the GI movement, and particularly white GIs, actively take up the struggle against national oppression and racism. Without this type of commitment clearly put into practice on the part of white GIs, it will be impossible to build any kind of real unity--for such unity could only be on those issues which were acceptable to or of importance to white GIs.

Particularly important for GI projects to take up is the question of political and legal repression of Third World GIs. Struggles waged around Third World political prisoners, which involve both black and white GIs, can be tremendous steps forward toward achieving unity. Again, however, the white GIs will not be moving forward the struggle if they merely confine themselves to "supporting" whatever the Third World GIs initiate around the case; there have in fact been good examples of predominately white organizations on the base initiating the struggle, and of large numbers of black GIs joining in the fight. It is precisely the question of white GIs taking the initiative in fighting national oppression, based not on do-goodism or white guilt, but on their own understanding that an attack on black GIs is fundamentally a class question, and an attack on all GIs, that needs to be dealt with.

White chauvinism is the main roadblock holding back unity between the nationalities within the military today. At the same time, there is a great potential basis for this unity to develop. The advanced and class conscious members of all nationalities are responsible for helping to develop this unity--for this is a political task which is necessary for the entire struggle to move forward. But the main responsibility for combating white chauvinism falls on the white GIs themselves, and white GIs must take up this task firmly, enthusiastically, and with a clear political perspective on how to achieve the unity essential to victory.

### Women in the Military

In our work with women in the military, we have seen a tendency to view work with women either as secondary or a side issue, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the tendency to try to organize women simply because they "are there." In fighting these tendencies, we must look at the role of women in society and women in the military. The question of the oppression of women is one of the key issues in our struggle. The oppression of women keeps women in an inferior position and divides them from the entire working class in much the same way as does national oppression. The oppression of women must be struggled against because, in so doing, we are striking a major blow against imperialism.

Women GIs are playing an increasing role in the military. As statistics show, the rate of enlistment of women is increasing rapidly. Women are being used to fill many menial jobs which once were held by men, and in this way, the military is trying to function efficiently even though their total enlistment quotas are not being met. Women are oppressed in the military by things like job discrimination and health care, but they are also oppressed by the sexist attitudes fostered by the brass. Sexism is used by the brass as propaganda for controlling male GIs as well as keeping men and women divided against each other. By striking a blow against this division among GIs and by fighting against the oppression of women in the military, we will be increasing the unity among GIs.

The role of military wives, as chattle of their GI husbands, is also crucial in our work. Military wives often become involved in struggles around working and living conditions both on and off the base. GI organizers must integrate these struggles into the work of the project and not see them as "women's" issues. Wives may take the lead in pushing the struggle forward, but we must see them as equally as important as the struggles waged by GI on the base.

Finally, it is really important that GI organizers bring the GI's entire family into the project. Divisions often occur between a husband and wife if one or the other is not involved in the work of the project. We are attempting to build unity in all our work and that extends to unity in military families.

### Question of Homosexuality

It is clear that there are many gay GIs in the military. The question of how to deal with gay GIs has often come up and been discussed, but has never been resolved in terms of our practice. There has not been unity on the gay question in general, since there are two basic positions. One position says that there is a major division in the working class between gay and non-gay people and that the division should be struggled against. Gays should be recognized in society on an equal footing with women or Third World people and that all movement people should be struggling against the oppression of gays. In GI work, this position comes down to the idea that gays should be organized around their oppression as gay people. The military uses gay-baiting to intimidate GIs and control them in the same way that sexist attitudes towards women are used. The position says that fighting gay oppression should be a principle in our work.

The other position on this question, which was agreed to by a majority of the VVAW/WSO GI workshop weekend, is that homosexuality is a reactionary tendency which is one symptom of the primary problem of the oppression of women. Gayness is an inability or unwillingness to deal with the contradiction in this society between men and women. In the case of male gays, homosexuality is the height of male supremacy in that it is a complete rejection of or unwillingness to deal with women. In the case of women, gayness is an incorrect response to their oppression. In either case, it is an escape from the basic contradiction. It is a non-struggle attitude which is reactionary.

It is important for us to separate the gay question from the organization of women. The question of homosexuality arises out of the oppression of women, but is a qualitatively different issue. The oppression of women is one of the primary divisions within the working class. The oppression of women has a material base and is essential to the ruling class' maintainance of power over the working class. The liberation of women is inextricably bound up in the liberation of the whole class; the liberation of women would be a strong and decisive blow against the imperialist state.

Homosexuality is one of the symptoms of the oppression of women, but it is not a primary division, with a material base, within the working class. If there were no taboos against homosexuals and if all bourgeois democratic rights were extended to them, the system of imperialism would remain intact and virtually undamaged.

In terms of GI work, the majority position from the workshop sees us working with gay GIs in the same manner as we would work with any other GIs. It is most often true that a gay GI who begins to relate to the struggles that a project is involved with, or who seeks military counseling, is doing so as a result of being oppressed in one of the many ways that all GIs are oppressed. Many times, the GI is not openly gay, which means that they are not being oppressed because they are gay. If the GI is a woman, then her main source of oppression is because she is a woman and not because she is gay. In those cases where an openly gay GI is facing harassment because he/she is gay, that situation should be dealt with in much the same way that we would deal with someone who is busted for drugs. We do not raise the use of drugs to a principle and defend the use of drugs -- similarly, we should not defend homosexuality. We should attack the military, around that individual's case, the same way we would attack the military in a drug case; we focus on the oppressive judicial system, the brutality of the confinement system, and the stigma of a bad discharge.

CONCLUDING NOTES--INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

This paper must reflect the fact that we have not brought up and discussed the concept of what the strategic service is in the revolutionary struggle, what the key units are, and other questions of priority. There is some thinking on these questions within the organization, but rather than attempt to put forward a clear position at this time based on not enough discussion and debate, we will simply point out here that these are questions which must be taken up and resolved quickly as we move to put our practical plan for the development of GI work into action.

On this point, it may be said however, that it is clear that the large, socialized, unit-of-choice combat arms divisions must be a main area of concentration. These army units form the backbone of the fighting strength of the U.S. army; it is here that the highest concentrations of poor and third world GIs are concentrated; it is here that the conditions are the worst, the repression at its peak; it is here that GIs are assigned for a minimum 18-month duty tour, thus providing a stable organizing base. Thus, regardless of the results of further investigation, it is fairly certain that within the Army our priorities at least initially will focus on these key units.

The role and relative importance of the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, the National Guard and Reserve units of the various branches, the purpose of organizing non-combat military installations, and other questions are important ones, and need to be taken up in a systematic way in order that our work can proceed in a planned way, and our members doing GI work can have some guidelines and criterion for their work.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM--

A program should serve as the guiding basis for our work in the period ahead. The actual practical program presented below is based on the political perspective reflected in this report as a whole; it tries to crystallize these politics into a plan, a series of key areas which should be concentrated on, and systematically summed up. One of the key weaknesses of the GI movement historically has been its fragmented nature, with each project tending to follow its own course, primarily in isolation--despite the valuable role played by such newsletters as GIPA, and other correspondence. Only by implementing a clear national program can we sum up national our mistakes and our strengths, and determine the correct path ahead. Within such a program, there should of course be flexibility--not to recognize this would be extremely mechanical.

What would to goals of such a program be?

Such a program must address itself to the questions facing GIs, to the oppression and exploitation they suffer as members of the armed forces--and such a program must serve to develop their understanding of the ruling class intends to use them (or is already using them) to enforce its oppression and exploitation of their

of their brothers and sisters on the outside. The connection between their own oppression, and the oppression of others, must lead to the question of which road GIs will take--will they join with the masses of the people against the imperialists, or will they allow themselves to be used against the people in the interests of the imperialists?

Thus, the program should contain demands such as the eight-hour day, demands around living conditions, and other primarily economic questions. The program should see as a major focus the fight for a "democratic military," for the right to resign at any time with a single-type discharge, for the right to organize groups and clubs, distribute literature, etc., for the right of trial by jury of peers and elimination of the UCMJ. (While making demands in the field of democracy we should be careful to put forward demands which "make sense" to the GIs themselves, and which arise out of the practical struggle--and avoid "pie in the sky" demands which are impossible and would be viewed by the GIs as unattainable and ridiculous, and would therefore fail to command support. Such a demand, might be voting on the course of action to take. But by "impossible" we don't mean "the imperialists won't go along with it." Of course they "won't go along" with the idea of a democratic military--but the question is not whether the imperialists "go along" with something, but whether or not we force them to go along with it. They didn't want to "go along" with withdrawing from Vietnam either.)

The program should deal with the question of racial and national oppression within the military, in a way that will build unity between the various nationalities. The importance of this cannot be over-estimated. Also, demands around the oppression of women in the military should serve to unite, rather than divide, and should serve to educate male GIs about the significance of the fight against women's oppression for the whole struggle, and the crucial role women are in fact playing in the whole class struggle today.

We must also put forward demands AGAINST imperialist war of any kind--either war between various imperialist countries, such as the US and the Soviet Union; a war by an imperialist country against a socialist country like China; or an imperialist war against an oppressed nation fighting for independence; or a war fought by remote control, such as the US-backed Israeli aggression against the Arabs. We must explain to the masses of GIs the connection between the world imperialist economic crisis and the growing threat of a new, inter-imperialist world war. We agree with the idea of continuing to focus specifically on Indochina, but at the same time our program must take up the broader question of inter-imperialist war as the world crisis deepens.

Also, demands must be put forward that all forms of riot-control training and any kind of use of the troops against the American people be forbidden. This includes strike-breaking (like the National

postal strike of 1970); troop use in controlling  
and all the way down the line. These demands will  
have significance as the world crisis deepens and  
struggle sharpens.

One thing, as mentioned above, is that the program  
is through struggle around their own oppression,  
against the oppression of all--from opposition to  
to opposition to the whole imperialist system--  
understanding of the necessity to change certain things  
military--to an understanding of the necessity to abolish  
itself.

DRAFT PROGRAM FOR VVAW/WSO's GI ORGANIZING

II. **Given the basic analysis and political perspective we have set forth on the nature and goals of our GI organizing, and given the fact that until there has been much more extensive and widespread practice we will need a broad or general program of GI work that can be further focused or refined in the future as we sum up our practice, we propose that VVAW/WSO's GI organizing work focus on the following programmatic areas in the coming period.**

1. The Domestic Use of GIs Against the Working Class

The U.S. military's ultimate purpose is the support and maintenance by force of arms of U.S. imperialism, both at home and abroad. GIs, while largely from the working class and largely returning to it after military service, are members of "special bodies of armed men" whose social role is the suppression of the U.S. working class domestically and the enforcement of imperialism's rule abroad. Historically in the U.S., GIs have been forced to serve in this role and have repeatedly been used to break strikes, act as scabs against U.S. workers and suppress popular movements. This is particularly true of many reserve and national guard units who are now being geared for use in various community "pacification" programs, strike breaking and for use in setting up martial law.

Imperialism is now in a deepening, worldwide, economic crisis. As this crisis intensifies, imperialism is increasingly going to try and place a larger and larger percent of the burden of this crisis on the backs of working people in the U.S. This naturally is going to intensify the militance and resistance of the struggles of the U.S. working class against such oppression. Given this situation, and given the need of U.S. imperialism to maintain itself and its rate of profits at the expense of the American people, we see that there will be a serious increase in the domestic use of GIs against the working class as scabs, strike breakers, riot cops, and ultimately, as potential agents of martial law.

Realizing that lower ranking enlisted people are caught in a contradiction -- that they are being used against the class with whom their real interests lie and that they are themselves oppressed by the conditions existing in the military -- we believe that there is a strong basis for unity between GIs and the people's movement. We believe that this basis of unity provides us with the opportunity of building a strong alliance between the struggles of GIs with the overall struggle of the U.S. working class; the potential for organizing GIs into the anti-imperialist movement is great if we seriously take on the task of doing it. The task of developing class consciousness among GIs must be a primary task of our GI work. Given the consequences for the people's movement if this is not done, we feel it is imperative that VVAW/WSO forcefully address itself to it.

In conclusion, our work in this area would specifically orient itself to: A) the use of GIs as scabs, B) the use of GIs as strike breakers, C) the particular role reservists and national guardsmen play in this process, D) the use of GIs as riot cops, E) the use of GIs in "Civil Affairs Management" programs, or in other words their use in implementing martial law in our communities.



## 2. National Oppression

In the U. S., Third World (TW) people face a dual oppression under the system of imperialism: class oppression as members of the single multi-national U. S. working class and national oppression as members of the oppressed nationalities in the U. S. National oppression, and its ideology -- racism, is one of the primary weapons used by the imperialist ruling class to divide the U. S. working class. The imperialists use national oppression as a "divide and conquer" tactic to try to insure that people will not unite and begin struggling together against the system.

Until the U. S. working class is able to successfully combat the use of national oppression by the imperialist ruling class, the people's movement will never be able to attain any real or substantial victories. For VVAW/WSO, this means that unless we forcefully take up the struggles of the oppressed nationalities for liberation and fight to end the special oppression they face, we will objectively be holding back the anti-imperialist struggle and refusing to attack one of the major strongholds which maintains and keeps the system of imperialism alive.

In the military, just as in the rest of society, national oppression is the primary weapon used by the brass to divide GIs against each other and prevent them from achieving the unity necessary to struggle against the system. Just as the struggle against national oppression is a prerequisite for advancing the struggle of the working class, so it is a prerequisite for building a strong anti-imperialist GI movement. Unless VVAW/WSO leads the fight for an end to all forms of national oppression in the military, it can never hope to see the GI movement move forward.

As conditions in our society change, the struggle against national oppression in the military is going to become even more crucial than it is now. During the 1960's, the primary factor forcing people into the military was the draft. Now, under the deepening economic crisis of imperialism, economic conditions are doing the drafting. As a result, TW men and women are being forced into the military in ever greater numbers. (See section of Politics of GI Organizing/ 3rd World GIs). Clearly the motivating factor for this change is precisely economic necessity. At the bottom of the economic ladder in the U. S., entering the military is increasingly a simple matter of survival for TW GIs. Given this understanding, it is clear that the fight against national oppression must be at the very heart of building a fighting anti-imperialist GI movement.

Evidence of national oppression in the military can be found everywhere. In most units, it is SOP for the brass to single out TW GIs for special harassment to the end of dividing them from white GIs. The numerous, so-called "race-relations" councils and similar programs supposedly aimed at ameliorating differences between white and TW GIs actually -- and intentionally are designed to -- foster racism. It is not our purpose here to "prove" its existence. As has been developed in the general analysis of our politics around TW GIs, we can simply state that national oppression is a fact of life in the military. Our task, then, is to find the best ways of fighting national oppression and to incorporate them into our program of GI work.

While racism is definitely the main stumbling block to building a united, fighting GI movement, there is also a very real basis for actual unity. All GIs,

black, white, red, yellow and brown suffer oppression under the imperialist military and it is this common oppression we must build GI unity around; unity to fight the common oppressor while at the same time forcefully taking up the struggle against racism. In building this unity it is not a matter of how many times we SAY that racism is bad, nor how many times we say that the root cause of the problem is the system of imperialism. It IS a matter of how thoroughly we take up the struggles of TW GIs to combat the special problems and oppression they face in our day-to-day practice. It is only such systematic practice that will enable us to build a strong multi-national organization -- one truly capable of building and leading the anti-imperialist GI movement.

To this goal, we feel that there are primary areas of work we should focus our struggle against national oppression around.

\*\*\*\*We must fight against JUDICIAL oppression of TW GIs: The notoriously harsh military justice system, the UCMJ, is even more harsh and oppression when used against TW GIs. Specifically, we must fight for an end to a judicial system that: punishes TW GIs with a disproportionate number of Article 15s/non-judicial punishment; gives TW GIs pre-trial confinement to a much greater degree than white GIs and forces them to serve longer pre-trial confinement "sentences" than white GIs; tries TW GIs by court-martials in highly disproportionate numbers relative to white GIs; sentences TW GIs to longer and harsher prison terms than white GIs for committing the same offense; puts TW GIs in military stockades in highly disproportionate numbers relative to white GIs; and that metes out less-than-honorable discharges to TW GIs in overwhelmingly disproportionate numbers relative to white GIs.

\*\*\*\*We must fight against MILITARY POLICE repression of TW GIs: MPs consistently harass and provoke TW GIs as a matter of course. In any incident involving TW and white GIs, MPs will regularly beat or arrest TW GIs as opposed to white GIs as a tactic in dividing them against each other.

\*\*\*\*We must fight against JOB DISCRIMINATION against TW GIs: TW GIs are given the worst -- and generally the most dangerous -- military occupations. The brass forces TW GIs into non-technical combat units on the basis of racist and culturally biased tests such as the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). Tests like these measure academic training and understanding of majority cultural norms rather than true intelligence. Their standards inevitably force TW GIs into low-skill or "soft-core" military occupations. While blacks, for example, represented 12.1% of all EM in the military in 1971, they held 16.3% of all combat specialty jobs and 19.6% of all service and supply position jobs as opposed to 4.9% of the electronics field. This discrimination around job placement naturally is also very evident in the ranks TW GIs attain. It is no accident that they kept a highly disproportionate numbers in the very lowest enlisted ranks.

\*\*\*\*We must fight against the CULTURAL oppression of TW GIs: In addition to the cultural bias underwriting the job selection system in the military, cultural oppression of TW GIs must be fought in many other areas of military life. Spanish speaking GIs are forced to take military entrance examinations and training programs administered in English. Thus, many Chicano and Puerto Rican GIs are evaluated by the brass as dull or "low achievers," and assigned to the least desirable occupa-

tions. Many unit commanders systematically discriminate against Spanish speaking GIs, ridiculing their unique cultural heritage and harassing them for speaking Spanish with each other. Many black GIs struggle to express their personal and national identity through cultural and symbolic expressions and are subjected to intensive command harassment and repression as a result. The brass has forbid "dapping" or power greetings in many units while the wearing of various forms of clothing and ornaments reflective of black people's heritage and culture -- and an expression of solidarity with each other -- are similarly subjected to such command bias. Despite their mainly symbolic nature, black-power rings and bracelets, black liberation flags, carved black fists and other paraphernalia are often forbidden by commanders. Such disputes over cultural freedom are often the "last straw" and frequently provide the spark for GI resistance struggles. While we realize that this is just a basic formulation of the nature of this problem, we nonetheless see it as a crucial part of the struggle against national oppression.

\*\*\*\*We must fight the particular oppression of TW WOMEN in the military: While we must similarly admit our lack of practice in this area, and a resulting inability to fully sum up the primary blows we must direct against the oppression of TW women in the military, it is clear that this is a very important aspect of our work in this area. While TW women in the military are subjected to the dual oppression of being members of the single multi-national U. S. working class and members of oppressed nationalities, they also suffer the oppression that all women face under the imperialist military. Given the greatly increased role that women are playing in the military and the high percentage of TW women among them, this is an area of work we cannot overlook.

\*\*\*\*Finally, we must relate the struggles of TW GIs to the CIVILIAN THIRD WORLD LIBERATION STRUGGLES going on in the U. S. On top of all the other forms of oppression TW GIs face in the military, many have also been forced to suppress their own people when the military has been called in to suppress domestic rebellions of people fighting back against their oppression; i.e. the Watts and Detroit uprisings. We must seek to build the unity between these two aspects of the struggle against national oppression in the U. S., continually trying to relate the struggles of GIs to the struggles going on in their communities: police repression, poor living and working conditions, etc.

### The Oppression of Women in the Military

The oppression of women is one of the institutional supports of the imperialist system. Like racism, it is one of the primary weapons used by the imperialists to sow divisions among the people and prevent them from being able to unite together to fight their common enemy.

It can be said that to liberate women is to liberate society. It is certainly true that without fiercely struggling to end the oppression of women, an institution at the very foundation of the imperialist system, we can never expect to defeat it. Conversely, we must take as a basic fact of life the understanding that the only way to really end women's oppression is to put an end to the system of imperialism that causes it in the first place.

In terms of building a fighting anti-imperialist GI movement, we see the need to fight women's oppression in the military as an absolute necessity. Women are entering the service in ever greater numbers and are playing an ever more important role there. We see the need to fight for an end to the oppression women face in the military BECAUSE of this strategic role they play in the struggle: not because "they are there" or that we "believe in women's liberation" in the abstract.

When we speak of organizing women in the military, we must make clear that we are not just talking about women who are actually in the service. We are also talking about the wives of GIs, who, in a very real sense, are themselves in the service. In many ways the wife of a GI is just as important to the struggle as her husband. Not only are there many times more GI wives than there are active-duty servicewomen, but they have a relative degree of freedom of action that makes them a potentially powerful force in building a fighting GI movement.

A final and extremely important perspective that must characterize our work with women in the military is that women can be brought into the struggle not only around their particular form of oppression, but also around the broader struggle in the military. We cannot allow artificial division in our work to be created along sex lines unless absolutely necessary. While women have and will take the lead in particular struggles, such as around housing, living conditions, schools, health care, etc., we must not fall into the error of viewing these as "women's issues." They are just as important to building a fighting anti-imperialist GI movement as struggles around the UCMJ, democratic rights struggles, etc.

In terms of outlining our program of action for fighting the oppression of women in the military it must be pointed out that more practice is needed before we can sum up a definitive program for work around the question of women's oppression. We do, however, see certain basic areas of oppression that we must build our struggle around:

1) We must fight to end the oppression of GI WIVES

The point of oppression of GI wives and the families of GIs is that the military regards them as the chattel of the GI. They are expected to behave in a certain way or the GI is often punished for their actions. There are many issues that concern GI wives in particular such as health care, housing, schools, commissary/PX ripoffs and rising prices, inability to get on-post housing, inability to maintain their families on the pay scale of a lower-ranking EM, etc, and institutionalized male supremacy. Not the least of the oppression GI wives face is the deadly numbing emptiness of living on a military base with no real role in society other than that of being the wife of a GI. While there is clearly much more practice that needs to go into the development of struggles around these issues we do feel that they are central to the building of any successful anti-imperialist movement.

2) HEALTH CARE:

Military health care is at best inadequate; but in terms of the health care available to women in the military it is utterly inadequate. Much of the specific health care treatment women require is simply not available in the military health care system. In terms of the medical care women do get from the military, it is characterized by callous treatment and disregard for their needs and well-being. All GIs were promised full and adequate health care when they were inducted into the service. This goes for women as well as men. The fight to see that this is accomplished in fact as well as in words is a primary area of struggle around women's oppression. Health care is a right that should never be denied.

3) JOB DISCRIMINATION:

As in civilian life, women in the military are subjected to severe discrimination in terms of the system of job placement. While the Army may boast about opening up MOS categories to women, the reality is far different. The truth is that service-women are channeled into the most menial jobs as a matter of course. Women do not have access to many military career fields, particularly the technical fields, simply because of sex discrimination. The fight to end discrimination of women around jobs must be a key part of our work with active-duty women.

4.) MALE SUPREMACY IN THE MILITARY:

The ideology of women's oppression under imperialism is male supremacy. Male supremacy is manifested in thousands of ways under the imperialist system. The system actively fosters these male supremacist attitudes to justify its exploitation and oppression of women. In the military, the ideology of male supremacy is pushed in every facet of military life. This brainwashing is linked with identifying blind obedience and

meek submission to arbitrary discipline as "masculine," as opposed to "pussys" who raise questions or struggle against military oppression. This propaganda also divides men from women, teaches men to see women as weak and helpless.

The military recognizes two general categories of women: plaster virgins and whores. The common denominator the military sees between these two categories is that neither have the capacity of thinking for themselves and must be viewed as children or mental incompetents. Women actually in the military are regarded with contempt, viewed as either lesbians or "government paid whores."

Like racism, male supremacy is one of the basic stumbling blocks to building a united GI movement. If we are to build the GI movement in a real way we must take up and lead the fight against male supremacy, job discrimination, health care inadequacies, and the oppression of military families.

#### 4 UCMJ STRUGGLES

The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) is one of the main props of the military disciplinary system. It is a code which negates, for all practical purposes, any possibility of a "fair" trial, even from the bourgeois-democratic standpoint. The UCMJ is in fact a separate judicial system altogether from that which the rest of society lives under. The Article 15 system provides an effective coercive measure which forces many people to take punishment without a hearing, for fear of a heavier sentence if they go on trial. There is no trial by jury of peers. Sentences can be ridiculously long for the most minor offenses. Many of the "offenses" banned in the UCMJ are merely normal democratic rights, and others are merely arbitrary and ridiculous. The UCMJ serves to damp down resistance to the military because of simple terror at the consequences of such resistance. It is essential that the UCMJ be systematically attacked, and eventually overthrown.

One of the most popular struggles in the GI movement in the past has been the anti-article 15 movement. This is still a very good campaign to wage; but it has been a mistake to simply focus on Article 15s and not bring in other questions around the UCMJ too. Whatever specific campaign is unfolded, the specific ought to always be tied to the ultimate goal of abolishing the UCMJ and establishing a democratic military judicial system and legal code. The racism in the UCMJ (number of blacks in prisons, stiffer sentences, etc.) should be exposed. The fact is that while of course we won't be able to get rid of the UCMJ for a while it IS possible to undermine it and make inroads and win important victories by militant mass struggles. Demonstrations in front of important trials, Article 15 refusal campaigns, etc., can don-

siderably hamper the power of the military.

It is extremely important, however, that these struggles be conducted in the correct manner. It is true that struggles around the UCMJ are in themselves a demand for a reform; but this does not mean that we should wage reformist struggles. This is especially important in how we handle political prisoner cases; "leaving the strategy up to the lawyer" and confining activities to writing congressmen and contacting the ACLU not only will not win the case, but will spread reformism, and ultimately defeatism, among GIs involved in such campaigns. Rather, we must expose the role of the UCMJ in preserving the imperialist military as an effective tool for imperialism--rather than an effective tool for the real protection of the people against imperialism.

At different bases, UCMJ struggles will take different forms; but the two guidelines we should keep in mind are: 1) the exposure of the UCMJ as a whole, even when the concrete struggle is around one aspect, like Article 15s; and 2) To point out the revolutionary implications of the struggle against the UCMJ, and not spread reformist illusions in the minds of the people with whom we work.

Other important areas where struggles around the UCMJ can be waged are:

- 1) Pre-trial confinement.
- 2) Extra-military instruction (EMI): A form of non-judicial punishment, in which people are threatened with Article 15s or court-martials unless they "voluntarily" accept punishment without any formal proceedings whatsoever.
- 3) The demand for a trial of jury by peers: This means that enlisted men will all be tried by low-ranking enlisted men (E-1 through E-4.) At the same time, we should put forward the demand that officers accused of crimes against enlisted men (Article 138's) should be tried by enlisted men also.
- 4) End the catch-all Article 134 which covers anything and everything "prejudicial to the good order, morale, and discipline of the armed forces."
- 5) End the use of prisoners for "slave labor" punishment details.

### 5. Working & Living Conditions

Given the understanding that the primary motivating factor forcing people into the military today is economic necessity; and that the economic crisis imperialism is now going through is increasingly going to leave its mark on economic conditions existing for people INSIDE the military as well as outside; we see the absolute necessity of forcefully taking up the struggles of GIs around living and working conditions in the military. People, largely working class people, are going into the military today, not because of the draft but because they need to earn a living. As a result, the conditions affecting the quality of life in the service are going to assume increasing importance in the struggles of GIs against the oppression of the military.

We believe that under present conditions there are no innately revolutionary issues, nor are there any innately "reformist" issues in terms of our work. It is all in the manner we raise these issues and how we lead people to struggle around them. Do we lead them to fight against the imperialist system or do we objectively lead them towards strengthening the system? No where is this more true than in our work around living and working conditions in the military. We can fan the sparks of political consciousness created in the struggle for better living and working conditions into building an anti-imperialist GI movement just as successfully as we can build a fighting GI movement around issues like Indochina or US aggression in the Middle East.

VVAW/WFO's GI program must lead the fight around living and working conditions. Given our admitted lack of practice in this area on a national level, and the widely varying conditions existing in the military, we don't see one or another specific area under this general category being more significant than another. We feel in fact that struggles may be developed around one or another area at one base that may have little if any relevance at another. As with all our work, the specifics of time, conditions, and place must obviously be fully taken into account when developing work here.

We see the following areas as being particularly important for us to develop our work around:

\*\*\*We must fight to improve SAFETY CONDITIONS: It is no secret that the working conditions GIs face are incredibly bad. The Navy is a floating disaster looking for a place to blow up. Even by admission of ranking Navy Brass, conditions on many of its ships are so bad that it is a miracle a major disaster hasn't already occurred. Nor is it any different in the other services. GIs are forced to work and fly on aircraft that come nowhere near meeting minimal maintenance requirements, work on old and defective equipment being pushed far beyond tolerance levels, handle dangerous explosives and other such materials, hold exercises or work under hazardous weather conditions, etc, etc. The list of such poor--or non-existent--safety conditions is almost as long as the number of military occupations; safety conditions in most of them are flat-out bad. Most GIs are affected by them in one or another way and thus are potentially able to be organized to fight back against them. Naturally, the particular condition of a given situation will be of the utmost importance in determining what the relative importance of building a struggle around safety conditions will be. As was demonstrated in the case of the recent struggle on the Coral Sea, the potential for building a fighting movement around safety conditions is very real.

\*\*\*We must build the struggles around VRB fights: On June 1st, 1974, Congress



passed a bill entitled the Armed Forces Enlisted Personnel Bonus Revision Act of 1974 which eliminated the Variable Re-enlistment Bonuses (VRB) for thousands of GIs. Most of the GIs affected by this bill were EM who had signed up for the Navy's 2x6 program prior to June 1st. Under the 2x6 program, a GI enlists for 4 years and at the same time then obligates him or herself to extend for an additional two years. It was designed to attract GIs into certain job categories by offering them advanced schooling and a good-sized re-enlistment bonus when the person began their two-year extension. The bonus amounted to anywhere from \$4000 to \$6000. Under the new congressional bill, the new bonus system lowers the bonus to between \$800 and \$1000. Pulling a move like this is part of the overall attack being waged on working people and GIs by the imperialist system in an attempt to get out from under its economic crisis. Such tricks as breaking re-enlistment contracts and lowering bonus pay as promised under programs like the VRB are going to continue to be pulled. GIs are naturally not going to passively accept such ripoffs and can be organized to fight back against them. By unfolding the crisis of imperialism around VRB struggles--or others similar to it--GIs can be brought into the understanding of the system of imperialism and the need to fight back against it: to move from fighters for one to become fighters for all.

\*\*\*\*We must fight against rising prices and the COMMISSARY/BX RIPOFFS: One of the lures or bait used to sucker people into the military, in addition to a "good job and good pay," are the other incentives such as the "fantastic" bargains GIs can get by shopping at military commissary's or BX's. The truth of the matter is that commissary/BX setup is no bargain at all. Prices are really no different than in most civilian food markets or shopping centers. The same principle as was laid out above, that the conditions being caused by the economic crisis of imperialism will have effects both inside and outside the military, definitely applies here. The commissary/BX system is experiencing major inflation and rising prices. Food, clothing, etc are all skyrocketing out of reach for many GIs and their families. Given the fact that GIs are enlisting in the service today basically to achieve a decent standard of living, the potential for organizing them to fight back against the ripoffs they are experiencing in the commissary and BX. And as things tighten up, things there aren't going to get any cheaper.

\*\*\*\*We must fight to win EXTRA PAY FOR FORCED OVERTIME: One of the biggest sources of oppression for GIs in the service today is forced overtime work. In most units, it is a more-than-regular thing. Not only is it cutting into the small amounts of time that GIs have for themselves, it amounts to getting more work out of GIs without paying for it. The demand for extra pay for forced overtime is a demand that would make sense to most GIs and is a demand that they can be organized to fight around. If it is raised in the context of building a fighting anti-imperialist GI movement; and not just as an economist or reformist demand raised in the interest of only one sector of society, it can be an issue that will move the GI movement forward successfully.

\*\*\*\*We must fight to win COMPENSATORY TIME FOR OVERTIME: In the same context as the demand for extra pay for forced overtime is the issue of compensatory time for overtime. If GIs are forced to work overtime it only stands to reason that they should be given compensatory time off at some point in the future. In many ways the demand for compensatory time may be more easily organized around than the demand for extra pay for forced overtime. Many unit commanders or NCO's have already made compensatory time for overtime a sort of accepted policy in their units. The problem is that it depends entirely on the whims of the unit CO or NCO and is not official policy throughout the service. A campaign for compensatory time could be organized on a

unit level, on a service level or on a national level: an advantage it has over a campaign for extra pay for overtime. But more importantly, it is a demand that speaks to the oppression of all lower-ranking EM and is one that could immediately be seen as being one worth fighting for.

\*\*\*We must fight to win better MEDICAL CARE FOR GIs: The medical care GIs get has never been notable. Medical facilities are always crowded, subject to command influence and often staffed by poorly trained personnel. As a rule they are also understaffed. At present the Brass is exacerbating this problem by reducing the number of military medical personnel and, in many cases, forcing GIs and their families to use civilian medical facilities. Given an EM's pay, it is just not feasible for a GI to handle the cost of such a situation. The demand for better medical care and more medical personnel is a demand that should be raised as a right for all GIs and for all people.

\*\*\*We must fight to win better conditions for MILITARY FAMILIES: The situation facing military families is a very broad and all-encompassing one in terms of the issues it presents to our GI organizing. Given the fact that military families, in many ways, have just as much influence around struggles in the military as their husbands, or wives as the case may be, and that they are attached to just about every major unit in and outside of the US, we believe their importance to the GI movement is quite significant. We still have a lack of widespread practice and experience in this area of our work but feel that there are a number of issues that families can be organized around. Again, it is important not to view these issues as solely relating to military families or just being "women's issues. While women may well provide the primary leadership for them they are just as much part of building a fighting GI movement as any other struggles.

a. The family of a GI is viewed as his chattel. They are just as much his property, in the military's eyes, as his car or his stereo. If his wife or children run afoul of the stated rules and regulations, or even against good old military tradition, it is the GI not his wife or children that is called to task; one quote at old military tradition is to give a GI a traffic ticket if his wife violates a traffic law. Struggles around this area can point to the fact that, despite military thinking to the contrary, military families DO have the same democratic rights as all civilians in the US and are NOT members of the military or subject to its insane laws and regulations.

b. A tremendous burden on lower-ranking EM is having to pay to move their families when transferred. While NCO's and officers have moving and transportation costs paid for when they are transferred to another duty station, EM don't. We feel raising a demand for free moving and relocation of GIs families to their next duty station is one we should raise and organize around. GIs have just as much right to a normal family life as anyone else.

c. The larger problem in this area is that many lower-ranking EM are not able to live with their families at all while in the military. Until a certain rank is attained, a GI must live in barracks or aboard ship; if he has a wife and family there are still no exceptions made to this rule. The resulting tragedy the situation poses for the GI's family is self-explanatory. Usually it means that he is separated from his family altogether or must bear the burden of off-post housing on a meager salary and then see them on whatever time off he has. We should

raise demands for the right of all GIs, of whatever rank, to live with their families.

d. Those GIs that are authorized to live with their families are often ineligible for on-post housing or unable to get it for other reasons. This forces them to live off-post and to submit to the racist discrimination and rent gouging that plague every military base in the world. On the pay of an EM this is a tremendous financial burden. We should raise demands for adequate on-post housing for all GIs as part of our struggle around living and working conditions.

e. On-post housing for GIs and their families is an area of struggle in and of itself. Most EM housing, when and if it is available, is more on the order of a big city ghetto rather than a decent place to live. GIs are discriminated against by rank and by race when applying for on-post housing for their families. The lower the rank the squalidier the housing. And for Third World GIs this is even more pronounced. Many military installations have special, naturally quite "unofficial" segregated housing areas for Third World GIs and their families. Living quarters are crowded, poorly maintained and carefully isolated from civilian society (the more isolated the more brainwashed and manageable GIs will be). Moreover, the threat of losing on-post housing is always held over the heads of lower-ranking EM by commanding officers as a means of keeping them in line. On-post housing can be removed at the whim of commanders without so much as batting an eye. The demand for decent on-post housing for all GIs and an end to racial discrimination in military housing is one VVAW/WSO should fully take up in its GI work.

f. We must fight for better SCHOOLS for military dependents: military schools suffer from all the same types of problems the civilian schools have. They are very overcrowded, have a lack of necessary teaching staff and suffer from the racist environment the military maintains. In some military schools it was revealed that military school busses were bussing the children of white officers to private schools at government expense to avoid having their children attend the racially integrated and far inferior military-run schools. Struggles around decent education for all military dependents should be taken up by VVAW/WSO as part of its GI work. The potential for developing anti-imperialist consciousness and really significant struggle around the military educational system should not be underestimated as we analyze how we can most effectively build the GI movement.

#### 6. Struggles for Democratic Rights

The struggle for democratic rights and the struggle to gain the rights that most civilians have is an important area of our work. In our experience we have seen this struggle take two forms--one is the struggle for the democratic rights of the GI project and the other is the struggle for democratic rights for GIs. GIs should be an integral part of the projects and a project's fight over such things as distribution of their papers, is not valid unless the GIs see the paper as their own.

The other factor we must be careful of is raising demands which are unrealistic or which will lead directly to reformism (making the military run more efficiently). Demands such as the election of officers is both unrealistic and not something we should be striving for in the imperialist military. GIs are well aware that the brass would never give an inch on such a demand and they further know that it would not work out in the military as it is presently structured. Such a concept can be used in an

educational way to contrast the US military with the militaries of socialist countries like China, but the primary difference is the purpose or role of the two militaries. Election of officers fits into a people's army but not into an imperialist military.

GIs are greatly restricted in how much they can say or in what political activity they can engage in. We should be fighting for rights like the freedom to hold political meetings on base, circulate petitions not only just to Congress, the right to attend demonstrations, the right to produce and distribute literature or papers. Some rights that we should be working for overlap other issues like the right to a jury of one's peers or the right to decent medical care as promised by the military. Another demand to raise is the demand for the right to resign. The military is the only job which a GI cannot quit. It should also be pointed out that officers can, in most cases, resign, but EM have no such option.

7. Single-Type Discharge

Although the struggle for a single-type discharge and the abolition of the discharge classification system has not been taken up widely in the GI movement, we feel that it is an important issue for organizers. Less than honorable discharges are given disproportionately to Third World and lower-ranking enlisted people. With the deepening economic crisis, these GIs are looking more and more toward the economic promises of the military and the job training they hope to use when they return to civilian life. The bad discharge and the threat of a bad discharge are going to be increasingly oppressive to GIs.

The demand of ending the discharge-classification system can help GIs to understand that it's not just the military that they are up against, but a whole system--a system that will follow them wherever they go. The demand can be used to explain why GIs are not given the option to quit their job. The discharge system is, in fact, designed to keep GIs from quitting their job by threatening to give them a life-long mark.

This demand is a good way to illustrate the fact that the struggles of GIs are part of a much larger struggle and that once they are out of the military they will face the oppression of being a veteran.

8. Struggle to end all imperialist wars of aggression

In our GI work we should unfold any campaign against imperialist wars of aggression in terms of the role of the military and the GIs in it. The role of GIs in the military is the suppression of the working class both at home and abroad. As the interests of the imperialists are threatened around the world, it is likely that the military is likely to be used to suppress struggles of national liberation as well as to engage in a confrontation or war with another imperialist power. In both cases, the enlisted people will bear the brunt of the military's actions.

Foreign adventures by the military will effect GIs directly. They will be cannon fodder as they were in Vietnam, or they will see a deterioration of their already bad conditions in the military. The Navy was used to back up the coup in Chile in 1973, by cruising the waters off the coast at the same time as the forces of reaction were taking over that government. Sailors on the ships, which had been on a cruise of

Latin America all during the preceding summer, faced long periods at sea, virtually no liberty, and unsafe ships which were being run to the maximum. Sailors on ships in Asia who have been involved in patrolling the Sea of Japan have faced similar conditions. In working with GIs around these immediate problems, we must always bring to the forefront the reasons for their deployment.

While we can bring up the issue of foreign intervention by the military around the problems of deteriorating conditions, we should be aggressively raising this issue to all GIs regardless of whether they are involved in these military actions at present. We should be continually educating GIs about the fact that foreign intervention and wars of aggression are not in their class interests. We can raise the lessons of Vietnam. We can raise the issue as it has been done successfully by our projects in Japan. The case of the Iwakuni 5 graphically illustrates how the issue of the foreign use of the military can be not only raised, but forcefully organized around.

We should always be on our guard against falling into the old anti-war mentality. Foreign wars of aggression are morally wrong and a waste of lives, but we must vigorously push an analysis of these actions. We must not fall into moralism or reformism, rather we must always put forward a solid anti-imperialist perspective. Such wars are not an accident; such wars are direct results of the system of imperialism. We can only build a fighting GI movement by building anti-imperialist consciousness about the role of the military and its intervention in foreign countries.

#### 9. UNIVERSAL & UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY

The amnesty demand, while not directly effecting most GIs (except deserters), does raise one of the most important issues of all by pointing out that resistance to the military, resistance to imperialist wars of aggression like Vietnam is correct---that resistance to oppression is our responsibility. We think that the strong history of resistance in the military in the last ten years should not be lost to the signing of Ford's bogus amnesty. Rather, we think it should be brought forward in our daily work and encouraged. The 637,357 GIs who resisted the military and received bad discharges and the tens of thousands of GIs who have deserted the service represent a tradition of resistance which should be built on, and cannot and should not be forgotten. As anti-imperialists, we should be encouraging resistance in the military and constantly demanding amnesty for those who do resist and suffer the consequences of resistance.

## VII. CAMPAIGN PROPOSAL

Given the general program we have developed, the following is a proposal for a campaign to orient our GI work around in the coming period.

There are three parts to this proposal, which we think should be discussed separately. The first part is the slogan we are putting forward as the general political guideline and goal of our work. That slogan is:

**BUILD THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST GI MOVEMENT--UNITE TO FIGHT ALL OPPRESSION!** 11

We feel this slogan sums up the essence of what our primary tasks are in the GI movement. We feel that the GI movement can, and must, be built on anti-imperialist lines, as indeed it has been in essence. Anything less than such a political perspective would be objectively holding the movement back, and tailing behind the level of political consciousness existing among GIs. Our role as GI organizers is to play a leadership role, showing GIs the best political direction they can take, not passively following behind whatever spontaneous action they may already be involved with. Secondly, the concept of uniting to fight all oppression, both those facing GIs and those facing people all around the world, speaks to the concept of linking up the GI movement with the people's movement as a whole. It squarely points up the fact that the GI movement is part of the over-all anti-imperialist movement and cannot be viewed in isolation from it.

The second part of the proposal is the demands. The proposed demands are:

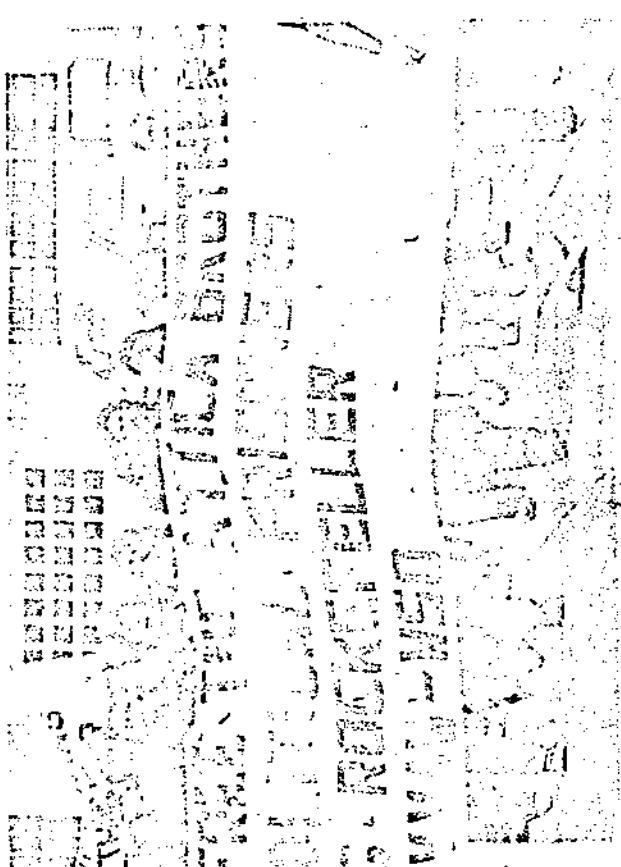
END ALL RACIAL OPPRESSION!  
 END WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IN THE MILITARY!  
 ABOLISH THE UCMJ!  
 END THE USE OF GI'S AS STRIKEBREAKERS AND RIOT PIGS!  
 SINGLE-TYPE DISCHARGE FOR ALL GIs AND VETS!  
 UNIVERSAL AND UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY FOR ALL WAR RESISTERS!  
 OPPOSE ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION!  
 DECENT WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR ALL GIs!

The motivation behind these demands is outlined in the Section VI of the working paper Draft Program.

The third part of the proposal is that we put out the call for a nation-wide GI-led demonstration on armed forces day of 1975 based on the slogans above. VVAW/WSO has already approved holding demonstrations on that day; the proposal discussion here would center around utilizing the above slogans and program on that day.

**AN INVESTIGATORY PAPER INTO THE CURRENT POLITICAL STRUGGLE  
TAKING PLACE WITHIN VVAW/WSO**

**BY THE BUFFALO CHAPTER**



**TELL NO LIES**

**CLAIM NO EASY VICTORIES**

We must practice revolutionary democracy in every aspect of our party life. Every responsible member must have the courage of his responsibilities, exacting from others a proper respect for his work and properly respecting the work of others. Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories...

Amilcar Cabral 1/10/68  
1975 Party Directive  
PAIGC  
African Party for the  
Independence of Guinea  
and the Cape Verde



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## Introduction

In writing this paper because we see the importance of as possible from the chapters to the resolution of the struggle going on within VVAW-WSO. The Buffalo chapter sees the seriousness of this struggle and the effect of our day-to-day work, on our organization, and on the anti-imperialism in the United States. We see the role of the chapters of the organization, whose practice determines the effectiveness in serving the needs of a segment of the population. We must determine the direction of this struggle and

we committed ourselves for presenting this paper to the rest of the organization on such short notice before the December NSCM. We took on the task of writing this paper in a mechanical way to encourage participation and support from the members of the chapter. We did not make this task a part of our day-to-day ongoing work until very recently. We committed ourselves in a disciplined way to the accomplishment of this paper, we have considered it necessary to thoroughly investigate and research the questions that it is very important that our position be based on a objective analysis of our history and the material conditions we are living in. We see that we must assess the strengths and weaknesses of the anti-imperialist movement and its enemies in order to decide about the direction of VVAW-WSO. In attempting to do this under these conditions we have looked to the dialectical method of our chapter's theory and practice and the history of the national organization. We have attempted to express the experience of veterans and the history of their resistance to gain an understanding through research of the role of the United Front Against Imperialism and its use as a tool of the anti-imperialist movements around the world.

We decided to set up a means of writing this paper that would allow all people to participate in a collective manner. We considered it important to represent our chapter in this state-legal position. In order to do this, we set up an advisory committee within the chapter composed of twelve people who would share the responsibility for research and investigations addressed in the paper. We then set up an advisory committee for the presentation and discussion of the paper so we could strive for unity around the paper of the entire chapter.

We see the importance of objectivity in approaching the struggle and the necessity to be honest and principled. We must correctly put politics in command. We see the importance of the interests of our political development to be based on a principled, or unprincipled as we attempt to develop a collective understanding and direction that will move the anti-imperialist movement forward.

The roots of this struggle are within the history of this organization. Our struggles in the past around sexism, vet's chauvinism, anti-communism, the importance of political education, to a lesser extent racism, and our entire development into an anti-imperialist organization have all been part of the process of development toward a struggle of this nature. However, the struggle has been removed from an analysis of our concrete conditions, our historical development, and our practice and has been manipulated by forces inside and outside of VVAW-WSO. The struggle has not been carried out in the interests of the political development of the organization. This is a result of the view that this struggle will be "won" or "lost" by one side or the other. This is shown by the lack of investigation and research that has taken place, the definition of this struggle as one of two or three lines which misrepresents the level of development of the struggle, and the position baiting that has taken place. The line of the National Office has been pushed in Winter Soldier, at national conferences (i.e. NCUUA and GI Conference) as representative of a line that has been struggled around and achieved political unity and does represent the organization as a whole. This, in fact, is not reality. This has effectively forced opposition to that line out of the organization and misrepresented the organization to other forces in the anti-imperialist movement that we should be striving to unite with in an honest way. The lack of respect for the membership and their role in the resolution of this struggle has been reflected in the arrogant and condescending tone in which it has been addressed to them. This is a commandist tendency, where unqualified "correct" ideas are being put forward in a way which discourages principled political struggle. This can be seen in how the NO dealt with criticisms in their clarification paper. They lay blame to the membership's "misinterpretation" and "confusion" as the basis for the criticisms and clearly did not see the need to re-examine and reinvestigate their own position before writing their "clarification". While the NO admits certain "weaknesses" in their position, they fail to clearly state their concepts and deal with the criticisms as conscious political disagreements. While the concept of constituency organizing is still central to their political position, the term is discarded. The concept of United Front is also central to their position, but the NO denies the necessity to educate the masses in the organization to further their understanding of the concept. This is pure Opportunism!

There have been other tendencies toward manipulating this struggle in a way that is not in the interest of political development. A meeting to consolidate the "minority line" before the December NSCN has been proposed. It is not clear to us who this meeting was supposed to include, but it also represents the tendency to view this struggle as a battle to be "won" or "lost". The struggle will not develop in a principled way, with politics in command, as long as mechanical solutions are relied upon.

There have been forces outside the organization which have served to manipulate the struggle also. The Revolutionary Union has recently taken a great interest in the "upsurging spontaneous veterans' movement" and in VVAW-WSO as the "leaders" of this movement. VVAW-WSO has consistently been portrayed in this way in publications of the RU, assuming a level of unity around such a program that does not objectively exist in VVAW-WSO. Their per-

ception and analysis of our activities has not indicated an effort at investigation and study to put forward an accurate picture of VVAW-WSO. (Isn't this their responsibility as communists?) This portrayal of VVAW-WSO, while inaccurate, would not affect the internal resolution of the questions that face us, except that it is linked to direct efforts at manipulation within the organization. A clear example is the formation of chapters and regions of VVAW-WSO by RU. This serves to push a particular line through a mechanical manipulation of our "democratic" processes, rather than through applying principled political struggle and political education of the masses.

The nature of the "democratic" processes in VVAW-WSO lends itself to its hindrance, instead of the positive development of this struggle. We think it is necessary to address ourselves to the task of analyzing and restructuring our internal organization before struggles such as this can be resolved in a way that genuinely represents the masses in the organization. We see the necessity for more in-depth investigation and research into the "upsurge of veterans", coupled with a scientific analysis of the concrete conditions of imperialism today; specifically keying on resistance to imperialism in third world countries and colonies and here in the beast itself. The different tendencies in VVAW-WSO can only be resolved on the basis of open and principled education and political struggle. This means that positions and criticisms have to be raised in a way that carries the development of the organization forward. As part of this process the distinctions between the lines being put forward will have to be sharpened and tested in practice on a broad scale. Only then will it be possible to label this a "two line struggle" for only then will two lines clearly emerge. Unity, Struggle. Unity means unity for all, as we come to a consensus, based on practice and illuminated by theory, as to the correct path for our organization to follow.

"Concrete analysis of concrete conditions, Lenin said, is the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism." Lacking an analytical approach, many of our comrades do not want to go deeply into complex matters, to analyze and study them over and over again, but like to draw simple conclusions which are either absolutely affirmative or absolutely negative. From now on we should remedy this state of affairs.

(Our Study and the Current Situation, April 12, 1944,  
Mao Tse Tung, Selected Works Volume III, p. 165)

## HISTORY OF VVAW-WSO

This section will analyze "A Brief History of VVAW/WSO"- a history written by the National Office and put forward in their position paper just prior to the Buffalo National Steering Committee Meeting in August. Our analysis is not presented as a point-by-point, demo-by-demo, NSCM-by-NSCM analysis because there is much that we agree with in the N.O. analysis. Therefore, if you do not see commentary on the RAW march or other items, please do not feel that we don't consider them important historical events. We do, but this is not the time to write a 400 page historical document to agree with each other on many points and not clarify the heart of some very basic disagreements with that analysis. We also think that since so many regions fully supported the N.O. position paper at the last NSCM, that it is a good basis for this discussion. A clear understanding of the historical development of VVAW-WSO is key in assisting us in the resolution of the struggle going on within our organization.

The beginning of the history 1967-1972 does not mention strongly enough the influences that the entire anti-war movement had in shaping the political growth and struggles of the organization. We were not just an angry veterans group out there going the struggle alone. In fact, moralism, guilt-tripping and a belief in the ruling class concept of democratic, legal institutions and their opportunist leadership were the order of the day. (All we are saying is give peace a chance.) The justified anger of veterans having served in an imperialist war was channeled into these types of political struggle. Winter Soldier Investigations became a sort of religious confessional (as all the liberals recoiled and said - tell me more - isn't war terrible); we pleaded with the ruling class representatives, spouted the words that the anti-war movement wanted to hear - Vets for McGovern. These actions were an outgrowth of a political outlook that had not yet focussed on a clear and common enemy. We were not born an anti-imperialist organization. We became one through development and struggle.

The development of class consciousness plays a crucial role in our development as an organization. Working class people are receptive to anti-imperialist politics because that is the nature of their real day-to-day struggle. Veterans, in and out of the military, have experienced in a very direct way the contradictions of the system. Anti-imperialist politics and struggle and anti-imperialist organizations do not drop out of the sky. In fact, they develop and their development is not as smooth as the N.O. position paper suggests. The mistakes that we've made are clearly part of our history, as are the lessons that we've learned in making these mistakes. It is not mentioned that in Miami - Operation East Patrol that VVAW acted as a sort of para-military organization and took on the complete task of security in acting as the police of the movement. This error, which has been significantly corrected, comes most directly from a tendency within the organization which has not been corrected: veterans' chauvinism. The analysis of East Patrol does not point out that at that time there was really no clear analysis of those Democratic and Republican delegates as ruling class representatives. In fact, VVAW had delegates (18) on the floor at the Democratic convention who did a large amount of

direct work in support of McGovern and indirect support in the form of such innocuous programs as "Vets Say No to Nixon", in the hope that the Democrats would correct our misguided foreign policy. This was the general state of the entire anti-war movement. We were not at this time an anti-imperialist organization.

The analysis of our support for the Cairo United Front, no longer a national project, does not clarify the problems that developed in that program. In fact, it is pure hindsight to state that the program in support of the United Front recognized the "links between imperialism abroad and at home". The program, in essence, was a project to support black people attacked by a racist police department and other racist organizations and at the same time to support an economic boycott of white businesses. This program was a clear recognition of racism, but was undertaken in a patronizing and missionary fashion. These are major factors in the program's being dropped as a national project. We know today that there are links between imperialism at home and abroad, but continued scientific investigation, concrete struggle, and theoretical development will be necessary to see these links clearly. To say that we recognized these links ignores the critical development of an understanding of racism and the right of self-determination that is on-going in this organization.

1973 is a crucial year for the understanding of our development as an anti-imperialist organization. The N.O. analysis does not offer a dialectical understanding of the importance of the year. From their analysis we could probably label 1973 as the year of the 'grope' - groping here, groping there, wandering around in the dark without any clear path. This form of analysis disregards dialectical development and struggle and it epitomizes confusion as the order of the day. This analysis is subjective; it is an accurate statement about how 1973 affected us as individuals, but it does not do justice to our collective struggle during that year.

The January 1973 inaugural demonstration is a case in point. We see the inaugural demo as a qualitative leap in the political development of our organization, and yet there is little mention of it in the N.O. analysis. This was the largest demo in the history of VVAW and it was there that we broke away from the liberal-democratic, milk-sop moralism of what then constituted the guiding force of the anti-war movement. We marched as a separate contingent (at that time an anti-imperialist contingent, although we didn't call it that). in full support of the struggles of the peoples of Indochina in the fight against imperialism. This is the point where we took a great leap as a national organization in the struggle against imperialism. After the demonstration and the signing of the peace accords, our continued activity as an organization, in contrast to the relative inactivity of the anti-war movement, we see as a result of our developing anti-imperialist consciousness and continued support of the Vietnamese peoples' struggle to defeat imperialism.

It was in 1973 that the Winter Soldier concept "took root"; the seed of that concept had been germinating for some time and it took root because in reality the organization was broader than a veterans organization. The thrust of our politics had become clearly anti-imperialist since VVAW-WSO was one of the most

visible organizations in the movement, increasing numbers of people joined the organization to oppose imperialism. To say that the Winter Soldier Concept took root because of the confusion in our search for ways to fight imperialism and that it was intended as the Mass Organization of the movement and the United Front does not reflect a clear method of investigation into the political forces that led up to its implementation. We were, of course, confused and in a state of disarray because the anti-war movement that we were a part of and supported by fell apart. It was frustrating and confusing - but then we needed to clearly understand our involvement with the 'give peace a chance' crowd. To speak just of confusion and not concretize the political struggle that was going on is at the very least a lack of investigation and at the worst overt subjectivity and position-baiting. (This line follows the principle that the best way to win a political argument is to relegate the opposing position to the realm of the absurd.)

In fact there was a real political struggle taking place in all the confusion. One aspect of it was the struggle to combat veterans' chauvinism. This is part of the struggle that is on-going in the development of class consciousness in our attempt to free ourselves from the domination of bourgeois ideology which seeks to control all aspects of our lives. In September of 1972 we were already seeing the necessity of this struggle. The inclusion of the following quote illustrates the fact that there was a conscious political struggle taking place within our organization, which was denied in the presentation of our history in the NO position paper.

"Since a veterans' organization by its very nature excludes the participation of non-vets, both men and women, there is a structural barrier precluding further development. In the case of VVAW this must also include the realization that fewer and fewer veterans of Viet Nam will be returning with the U.S. military's continuing shift to technological warfare and the use of comprador puppet regimes. When the war in Indochina actually ends much of the rationale for a purely veterans organization is negated. We do not intend to glorify in any way the status of being a veteran, justify our participation in the U.S. military or create chauvinistic, elitist notions of veterans being the vanguard of the American revolution. We do realize, however, that there will be a continuing need for a veterans organization. Veteran service programs should and will continue. Similarly, the sense of group identity particular to veterans is a valid basis for organizing groups for political action. At the same time we see the need for VVAW of being part of an organization open to all people, whether they are vets or not, who are commonly dedicated to the struggle of building a new society. An organization of Winter Soldiers could conceivably be created that would be open to all people who are in spirit and in action truly consistent with the goals that we are struggling for. VVAW would be a part of this organization, not the chauvinistic counterpart to a VVAW women's auxiliary or a VVAW non-vet auxiliary. This concept of such an all more encompassing organization would permit VVAW to grow and respond to the need of becoming an evermore sophisticated and relevant organization for realizing and accomplishing major social change."

Palo Alto, Sept. 1972.

Again referring to Gainesville, the NO states that "the fact that other organizations did not participate in that demonstration further reflected our lack of understanding of our obligation to help build the United Front". We find this criticism in fact correct, but we find it a completely opportunist method in the form in which it is put forward. Why isn't this criticism put forward for Dewey Canyon III, the RAW March, the Christmas bombing demos, Jan. 20 - in fact, just about all of our demonstrations before realizing the correct method of the United Front - which emerged at what point? We find this form of historical analysis to be based on subjectivity and not objective investigation. We can also see through the tone of the sum-up of Gainesville as a VVAW/WSO action being emphasized as an unfocused action to be merely a way to show what a confused state Winter Soldier brought about. This is not a correct form of investigation, but is based upon subjectivity, manipulation, opportunism and position-baiting. If this is the way that one has to win an ideological point, it is not a correct form of summation. In fact, we did not take up the building of the U.F. at Gainesville because we had never in any concrete way put the U.F. forward in any of our practice prior to Gainesville.

"Through the period since we became VVAW/WSO one fact has shone through our practice: those chapters which continued to grow and strengthen (numerically and politically) have worked around a specific organizing focus and, in most places no matter what the composition of the chapter in terms of veterans or non-veterans, this focus has been around amnesty with particular emphasis on vets issues."

#### NO Position Paper

We find this statement in error. We find the Buffalo Chapter is one of the strongest chapters in VVAW/WSO. What form of investigation did the NO make before arriving at this all-encompassing statement confirming the reason for their own political outlook. We as a chapter have asked NO members repeatedly to come to Buffalo to visit us and find out what our politics and practice are, to no avail. We know we are not alone in being ignored by the NO. Frequently NO members were within 100 miles of us, but we weren't informed until their visit was over, which would have been an opportunity to meet together, but was missed. The NO has an obligation to visit chapters at all levels throughout the course of our work, but has failed to do this. We would assume that this investigation would take place before such a statement was made on something so important as the direction and focus of our future organizational work, but from what we can see, this has not been done.

It seems that the NO has played a divisive role, playing up the political work of chapters which reflect the national office position in their political work, particularly the Milwaukee and Chicago chapters. We support the concrete work of these chapters. But the hub of the world is quite obviously not in the Chicago area (nor the Buffalo area). This seems a sham way to verify the reasons for building an anti-imperialist veterans movement. Perhaps it is more correct to observe that chapters which have done any form of programmatic work are those that have grown and developed strengths. Our



The Winter Soldier concept was not the advertising slogan for a VVAW membership drive. Nor was it just a clever way to grant card-carrying privileges to the significant portion of our membership who were non-vets, some of whom were in leadership positions. The Winter Soldier concept implementation was not an effort at quantitative change, but clearly a qualitative shift in our understanding of the tasks that lie before us. Although not clearly understood, the structural change in the organization has enabled us to understand that our role as a mass organization is to educate the masses to recognize the source of their oppression and to motivate them to fight the common enemy, imperialism. As the organization progressed from being a mass anti-war organization, the strengthening of organizational unity was evident. Through input from the non-vets as well as the vets, a strong anti-imperialist outlook was developing. It is important to note that while vets had a first-hand view of imperialism over-seas, non-vets, through day-to-day struggle here at home also experienced imperialism first-hand. The ghettos, racist prisons and big corporations along with the mansions on the other side of the track are not invisible. The force exerted by the joining of vets and non-vets resulted in a political threat which CREEP could not tolerate. That is why VVAW was attacked as an organization in Gainesville. The N.O. position paper shows no understanding of the significance of the Winter Soldier concept. They do not speak to the fact that non-vets had played a major role in the struggles of our organization from late 1971 on. While the Winter Soldier concept recognized this fact, it was also a developing recognition that we had to put anti-imperialist politics in command and build an anti-imperialist, not anti-war, organization.

At this point there is a basic point to be made about building a 'fighting organization'. VVAW and then VVAW/WSO has always been a militant, fighting organization. What is important is that not at all times did we clearly understand exactly who and what we were fighting, or how to do it. We continue to achieve this understanding only on the basis of our anti-imperialist analysis and struggle in concrete practice that conforms to the principles of our theoretical understanding. Our Gainesville actions need to be seen from this perspective. The N.O. presents Gainesville as the essence of a WSO action: the product of an unfocused organization. Any real analysis of Gainesville does not support this position. Gainesville did not culminate only in a disorganized national demonstration. The arrests, the trial, the political defense work and the effort at mobilizing masses of people to fight back against the use of prisons and the court system as tools of political oppression has resulted in a national organizational commitment to defend political prisoners. The political defense work that we do around the Leavenworth Brothers, the Attica Brothers, Gary Lawton and many others is not accidental or pure response. It is the continuous development of the lessons that we learned in being attacked by CREEP and the federal government. We were forced to do an analysis of who the legal system represents, how it works, why it works the way it does, and how to fight it. In this concrete struggle, we started to see more clearly some of those "links" between imperialism at home and abroad. In seeing those links, our practice at a national level has come to reflect the things that we've learned.

Chapter has not had an emphasis on vets issues although we have done work around them and intensive work around all national programs. No, we have not done a basic investigatory study into the politics and practice on a chapter by chapter basis, nor have we had the opportunity. The national office has that responsibility and should rightfully perform that form of investigation. We can only say that we don't think that this concrete form of investigation has taken place.

"You can't solve a problem? Well, get down and investigate the present facts and its past history! When you have investigated a problem thoroughly, you will know how to solve it. Conclusions invariably come after investigation, and not before. Only a blockhead cudgels his brains on his own or together with a group, to "find a solution" or "evolve an idea" without making any investigation. It must be stressed that this cannot possibly lead to any effective solution or any good idea."

Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, Oppose Book Worship, May, 1930.

## THE HISTORY OF THE VETERANS MOVEMENT

### 1. Observations

United States has been in seven major wars in its history as a nation country. These are the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korean War and the continuing Indochina War. After each of these wars, and after the smaller wars and 'interventions' as well, the ruling class in society has been challenged by its returning veterans. This is not a history of veterans' struggles; various levels of PWSO are giving that history the serious study it deserves. It is an attempt to analyze, on the basis of the study done so far, the essential factors of this history of veterans' struggles as well as the means by which the ruling class has tried to stifle these struggles. Each postwar period has had at least three factors in common. Generally speaking, the sharper the class contradictions and antagonisms in society in any given postwar period, the more these factors come into play. These factors are:

1. Veterans return to widespread predictions of social and individual unrest.
2. Veterans face genuinely oppressive conditions.
3. The system falls back on appeals to veterans' chauvinism, combined with force when necessary, to maintain control.

At the end of each war, there has been a widespread fear of the sudden influx of violence-prone veterans will have on our society. Generally, this has been combined with a paternalistic concern for the welfare of the returned 'heroes'. After the Revolutionary War, there was a widespread belief that the discharged members of the Continental Army were all looters and scoundrels. After World Wars I and II, newspapers were filled with advice on how to deal with returned husbands and sons. The Vietnam veterans have been portrayed in movies and on TV news as a clear example of this. The press contributes heavily to this after each war by sensationalistic reportage. Even well-meaning individuals like some of the psychologists and sociologists who helped popularize PVS as an issue, contribute to this fear in society. Our original work around PVS, before we started to reach a political understanding of its causes, also contributed to this. The effects of such fears are to create a general distrust of veterans among the general population and to make vets feel that they are individually to blame for their problems and that there are no solutions other than cynicism and apathy.

Another more important way this specter of fear and violence serves to stifle resistance is by raising a threat of paramilitary action against war veterans as a wedge to drive between veterans and the general population. Examples are the fears, heavily exploited by the ruling class, that World War I veterans were 'infected' with Bolshevism. Another example is the extensive red-baiting that accompanied the Bonus March. A more recent example is the sensationalistic - and totally false - 'speculations' about the existence of a gang of Black vets called 'The Mau Mau' who were bent on anti-White terrorism in Chicago a few years back. Such threats can then be used as a justification for repressive action. An ironic example is the forming of paramilitary SWAT teams, made up largely of Vietnam veterans, to counter 'terrorism'.

Both the branding of veterans as individually psychotic and the spreading of fears of paramilitary action are usually generated and spread by people who are not rank and file vets. In turn, these hysterical predictions are exploited by those who have the most to lose in a revolutionary situation—the ruling class and its allies.

2. After each war, contradictions arose that directly oppressed vets. This was true after the Revolution and it is true today—more so in fact, because of the class nature of society and the crisis facing imperialism. These contradictions take two forms: the first is those contradictions that are directly related to participation in the military and the second are those contradictions that are classwide, or which affect a particular group such as Blacks or Women, but which affect veterans within the class or the group to a disproportionate extent. This will be dealt with in the section "What is the Oppression of Veterans".

3. Following each war, as veterans began to confront the oppression they faced, whether as vets, as workers, or as members of a minority, the ruling class has tried to appeal to them as a privileged group in order to isolate them and cut them off from their friends and allies. Some of the means used to do this have been: official sponsoring of exclusively veterans groups to promote special interests; the granting of legitimate veterans demands in such a way as to further the social isolation of vets; and the distortion of the true nature of military service by militaristic displays of glory and honor designed to create an image of veterans as being more patriotic or self-sacrificing than others. While veterans' chauvinism has always been present, the present collusion of the military, the VA and the reactionary veterans organizations has served to institutionalize it to a considerable degree. This will be dealt with in the section "What is Veterans' Chauvinism".

When appeals to chauvinism fail, the state will resort to force. This can take many forms. It can be open terror, as in the "Red Summer" of 1919. It can be open force, as used against the Bonus March. And it can be legal force, as in the trial of the Gainesville Eight. Occasionally, appeals to chauvinism are concurrent with the use of force. One example is the use of the American Legion in the 1920's as a strike-breaking force against workers, many of whom were veterans also. Another example is the assault on the NYC VVAW/WSO Chapter at Shea Stadium during an "Honor Vietnam Era Vets Night" last summer.

These factors have existed after every war, although their relative weight varies according to the political and economic situation. Generally, the ruling class has sought to exploit both the first and third factors to stifle resistance to oppressive conditions. Although the idea of psychotic or terroristic veterans may seem to be in direct contradiction with the idea of veterans as a privileged group, they have served the same end—to keep veterans from organizing in the most effective way to confront and resolve the oppression they face.

There are more observations which can be made on the veterans movement in this country, but which lack the historical consistency which the above factors show. Briefly stated, they are:

4. In the past, this country has been largely able to absorb dissent, at least that of veterans, in its Western territories. Disaffected Revolutionary War veterans were among the first people to settle the Ohio Valley and the midwest. Civil War veterans, especially those from the Confederacy, flocked to the free land in the West in the years after the war. The West was still viewed as a Mecca of sorts during the Great Depression of the 1930's. With the closing of the West in this century, this factor probably won't enter the picture.

5. Black veterans have rarely organized around veterans oppression, but instead have directed their efforts at fighting National oppression. Also, in the past, Blacks tended to view participation in this country's wars as having a liberating effect. Blacks who served in the Revolution or the War of 1812 were generally freed after their service. To the 200,000 plus Blacks troops of the Union Army, the Civil War was a war of national liberation. Segregation in both World Wars put most Blacks in the position of having to excel as soldiers to prove an equality that should have been theirs from the start. What effect the 1948 Bourgeois "desegregation" of the military may have in the current period remains to be seen. Also, such factors as the migration of the Black Nation from the deep South and the growth of a Black proletariat may make significant differences.

6. Except for officers' society, there was little desire on the part of veterans to organize as such until after the Civil War. This may be due to the unstructured nature of the military prior to that time. Before the Civil War, there was a small core of regular troops augmented for short periods of time by militia units. The bulk of war veterans had been militiamen and probably did not tend to view themselves as soldiers in the sense we know. Hence, they probably did not view themselves as veterans to any great degree either.

7. The only example this country has of veterans who did not win in the war they took part in is the Confederacy. There veterans were instrumental in the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Veterans were also a major factor in the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of Fascism in Germany and Italy. Currently, many police agencies make an attempt to recruit Vietnam veterans for such units as SWAT teams and tactical patrol squads. What effect this will have in the growing revolutionary situation must be seriously studied.

#### B. The Bonus March

The Bonus March of 1932 is, in a sense, the exception to most of what is listed above. Not only did it occur 14 years after the end of World War I, but it was a genuinely spontaneous movement that included large numbers of Black veterans. It had a considerable impact on working class struggles in the depression, as well as on the way vets were treated after World War II. It is essential to the future of our political work that we do as complete and objective an analysis of this event as possible. Hopefully, this, along with the articles in Winter Soldier, will serve as a start. Two areas of documentation which are lacking in this work are oral interviews with participants and documents from the CP/USA and the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League (WESL).

Immediately following World War I, there was a wave of radical militancy the frequently involved veterans. A general strike of 1919, a "Labor War Veterans Guard" to defend the workers interests. In other parts of the country the IWW was instrumental in setting up "Soldiers and Sailors" based on the Russian Soviets. In one Eastern city and file vets paper, The Home Sector, reported that many of the radicals arrested in the 1920 Palmer raids there were servicemen. On at least two occasions in the early 1920's these armed groups of miners in tactical formations into the streets with scabs and goons.

Thus, vets faced conditions that were directly oppressive. The Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the VA, was inefficient, rife with corruption and unable to meet the very real needs of the returning vets. After an initial burst of enthusiasm greeting the veterans to return from France, they were looked upon as a burden and a liability. For the most part, though, there was no militant action directed at these conditions.

Attention was directed at war profiteers-both individuals and corporations. In 1924, Congress was forced to pass a bill calling for "adjusted compensation certificates" that would pay a bonus to the veterans on the length and nature of their service. These bonuses did not come due until 1945, a fact that led many to refer to them as "Tombstone Bonuses".

Veterans were also active after World War I. They stood in the vanguard of the fight against National oppression. Because they were singled out for lynching and police terror in the "Summer" of 1919. In many of the riots that occurred that year, veterans led armed resistance to their attackers. In one instance, Knoxville, Tennessee, they beat back attacking guardsmen armed with machine guns with little harm to themselves.

However, most of this activity had died away. While the 1920s fostered an image of prosperity and growth, the working class and National minorities could barely survive. Only the veterans organizations grew-the American Legion, the VFW, though they stressed the common experience as veterans, their membership was pretty much limited to ex-officers and vets from middle class, petty-bourgeois backgrounds.

When the Great Depression began and vets-like the rest of the country were hit full force by the shattered economy. The immediate payment of the Bonus began to take hold. It was a very popular one. Even the VFW started a petition drive. The Legion originally backed it, then reversed its position under pressure from big business. By early 1932, a Bill calling for immediate payment of the Bonus. Rank and file groups, including the WESL, appeared in Congress and demanded immediate payment. The government stated that it would be inflationary and that payment was out of the question.

### The March Begins

In April, 1932, the WESL put out a call for a demonstration in Washington, D.C. and began building for it in the cities where they were strongest-New York, Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. At the same time a group of about 250 vets got together in Oregon, apparently unaware of the WESL call, and decided to go to Washington for the Bonus. They formed six companies and elected officers. A right-winger named Walter Waters got himself elected "Regimental Commander". The group rode boxcars to East St. Louis, where they were ordered stopped by railroad officials. In response, they blockaded tracks and faced down six companies of National Guard. Their stand generated considerable publicity and veterans all over the country began making plans to go the D.C. DC  
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By May 31, 1932, there were about 1,300 marchers in Washington calling themselves the "Bonus Expeditionary Force" (BEF), and more on the way. Waters called together the leader of the contingents and formed an Executive Committee of Seven (XC) with himself as leader. The DC police chief, Pelham Glassford, a Brigadier General in the war, promised cooperation with Waters and was named secretary-treasurer of the BEF. He used his power to break the BEF up into different encampments, mostly in Maryland, and to control the distribution of food. He also worked with the XC to set up a BEF MP force. This force became Waters' and Glassford's basic means of control. Glassford later said of this vigilante force:

The BEF Military Police worked intimately with the Metropolitan Police under my command...where the Metropolitan Police under my command had to stop as a matter of law, the BEF MP's carried on.

Glassford put out a call to state governments and the rail monopolies to prevent new Bonus Marchers from arriving in DC. He also moved to cut off food and water supplies to the encampments. Vets kept arriving and the people of DC and the area kept feeding them until he backed down. Although the leadership of all the reactionary vets organizations- the Legion, the VFW and DAV, etc. -condemned the BEF, their rank and file actively supported it by helping marchers en route and supplying food to the encampments. By the end of the first week of June, there were close to 8,000 veterans in DC, some with families.

### The Role of the WESL

Although the WESL put out the first call for a demonstration in DC, it's pretty apparent that they weren't prepared for the spontaneous reaction that followed. Nor were they prepared for the speed with which Waters and Glassford moved to co-opt any revolutionary effect the BEF might have. After the first vets began arriving, the WESL opened an office in DC and began putting out its positions. (Without any WESL literature, it's hard to tell what these positions were-generally they seemed to concentrate on demanding rank and file elections, abolishing the MP force, and being more militant in the demand of the Bonus.)

Many of the vets organized by the WESL rejected Waters' undemocratic leadership and moved or were thrown out of the "official" encampments. About 600 moved into some abandoned buildings on Pennsylvania

near the White House. The WESL leadership put out a call for more organizing of vets to join the BEF and began doing propaganda and agitational work in the encampments. Harassment and beatings were so common they had to leaflet surreptitiously. It's possible that Waters' MP force murdered some of the WESL workers, whose bodies were found floating in the Potomac.

In New York City, a WESL contingent of 600 vets took over the 23rd St. Ferry to Hoboken. There they were marched from railyard to railyard until it was apparent the authorities were stalling. At the same time, a group of 168 vets organized by reactionaries was supplied with food, transportation and funds by the "police and citizens of Newark".

The WESL called for a march on Congress for June 8th. The XC responded by calling a "Red, White and Blue" parade for the evening of June 7th. About 8,000 marchers participated in this parade which, under heavy police guard, avoided the White House and disbanded before entering the Capitol Grounds. The next day only a fraction of that number showed up for the WESL march and it was called off. At no time in the first weeks of the Bonus March was the WESL able to mobilize many vets to attend their actions.

#### The BEF Settles In

By mid-June, there were about 20,000 Bonus Marchers in DC. Most were in four BEF encampments; the largest, Camp Marks in Anacostia Flats, held 12,000 people (including 300 children). Internal splits in the XC and the failure of the WESL June 8th march allowed Waters to consolidate his hold on the BEF. New contingents were registered in a ceremony which involved saluting the flag and taking a pledge against "liquor and communism". Known WESL sympathizers were ejected from the camps. Contingents from the South were allowed to segregate their areas. The MP and informant network was so heavy that many Marchers refused to talk to strangers.

DC  
Contingents continued to arrive in DC. They were met at the DC line by Waters' MP's and told to tone down their banners and signs. 200 permanently crippled vets arrived from the National Soldiers Home in Tennessee. A contingent of 1,000, under its elected leader, John Pace, arrived from Michigan and Ohio. In Toledo, they had taken over a railyard and occupied a roundhouse where they were surrounded by 800 police with tear gas and machine guns. 12,000 people showed up to offer support and supply them with food until the police backed down. By late June, a daily newspaper, The BEF News, was being published.

In mid-June, the House passed the Bonus Bill and sent it to the Senate, where it was scheduled for a vote on June 17th. That day, Glassford had key drawbridges raised, isolating most of the BEF in their encampments. About 10,000 vets managed to reach the city before it was announced that the bill was overwhelmingly defeated. The police, with Waters' backing, tried to move the vets back to their encampments. At this Waters' hold began cracking and a number of contingents moved into DC, including Pace's contingent and most of the Marchers from New York and Chicago. They joined with the WESL to form the Central Rank and File Committee (CRFC). The BEF broke into half a dozen different factions and Waters resigned.



Two days later, Waters regained power in a rigged election that was never even held in Camp Marks. He immediately purged his opponents from the XC and reformed his MP's into a company of "shock troops" armed with riot batons. He ordered an hour of drill every morning for the entire BEF and stated:

If any man in the BEF refuses to carry out my orders, he will be dragged out of Washington by the MP's. To hell with Glassford and civil law.

Around this time, the CRFC called its first action. Waters had the MP's seal off the camps to prevent anyone from joining them and threatened them with reactionary violence. To preserve unity, the CRFC called their march off.

By mid-July, there were between 25,000 and 30,000 vets in the area, of which 1,000 were camping directly on the Capitol grounds. Vice President Curtis ordered a detachment of 100 Marines to the Capitol grounds; 35 of them refused to leave their barracks and the rest refused to obey any orders once there. Congress prepared to take another vote and Waters marched to the Capitol with 10,000 marchers. In order to regain his hold on the BEF, he arranged with Glassford to be arrested two times - to chants of "We Want Waters". Afterwards he claimed he won major concessions from Glassford without ever saying what they were. Immediately after that Congress adjourned without passing the Bonus.

#### The End of the BEF

With Congress adjourned, many of the Marchers began drifting out of Washington. Waters' hold was slipping fast and he resorted to open fascism by calling for the formation of an organization to be named the "Kakhi Shirts". He said of it:

Inevitably, such an organization brings up comparison with the Fascisti of Italy and the Nazis of Germany. For five years, Hitler was lampooned and derided. But today he controls Germany. Mussolini was driven from Italy because of his political views. But today he is a world figure.

By late July, the CRFC was becoming a strong and militant force. They began calling marches on the White House to demand that Hoover order Congress into special session. On July 20th, Pace led 7 different attempts to picket the White House - each from a different direction. Each time they were stopped by police and finally Pace was arrested. At the same time, the government reached the decision to clear the BEF out of Washington.

On the 21st, an order was issued to the BEF to be out by August 4th. All government equipment on loan to the BEF was recalled and eviction orders were prepared for the abandoned buildings the CRFC occupied. Military units were placed on alert in the DC area and most GI's who had served in World War I or who had expressed any sympathy with the BEF were placed on special duty. Camps where weapons were stored were placed under especially heavy guard.

On the 25th, Pace was released on bail and promptly led a group to picket the White House. They were attacked by police and Pace and others were arrested for incitement to riot. Around this

It is reported that members of Waters' XC had been receiving a "Green Classification". On the 26th, Waters was informed of the government's plans to move against the BEF on the 28th. He told no one.

In the afternoon of July 28th, "Bloody Thursday", the government moved its troops. Police were sent to clear the buildings on Pennsylvania Ave. occupied by the WESL. In the fighting there, one vet was killed and another fatally wounded. Immediately after that, army units commanded by Douglas MacArthur-infantry, cavalry and tanks-arrived and began to clear the city. The BEF fell back slowly and took many casualties in the street fighting, especially to the cavalry charges. Infantry in the rear burned and destroyed the belongings of the Marchers. A number of innocent bystanders were also injured by the army. The official explanation was that they panicked and ran into the horses.

In the late afternoon, the army moved against the camps outside of DC using the same tactics. In the fight at Camp Marks, two infants died of gas poisoning. By the next morning the Bonus March was over and the veterans had dispersed.

#### Aftermath

The mayor of Johnstown, Pennsylvania offered to let the BEF encamp in a baseball park there until they had recovered. Waters accepted the offer and led about 7,000 vets and 400 dependants there where they found themselves put on display by local merchants as a tourist attraction. Some WESL workers also went along to continue agitation. After about two weeks of hunger and confusion, they disbanded.

Other Marchers were shunted forth between barricades manned by DC, Maryland and Virginia police until they finally found a way out of the area. The CRFC called for continued resistance in DC, but only a handful of Marchers responded. On the 29th, informants fingered about 50 of the most active CRFC members for arrest. The remainder were marched out of Washington by police. The government began spreading stories that most of the BEF participants were not vets, but were instead criminals, reds and aliens. A few people made attempts to capitalize on the name over the next few years, but these attempts failed. The Bonus March was over.

#### General Observations

It would be impossible to fully sum up the experience of the Bonus March and its political meaning at this point. Too much remains to be studied, both concerning the specifics of the March and the subsequent effect it had on workers' struggles in the 1930's. Some observations can be made, however:

The Bonus March was a spontaneous response to the nationwide economic crisis-not to any conditions that were particularly unique to veterans. The Bonus was the most accessible means of relief for crushing poverty they faced as unemployed workers, unemployed farmers or failed tradesmen. To fight for it, they aligned themselves on the basis of their status as vets. There had been a chance for other forms of relief- say, farm relief, but they would have fought for it on that basis. Their identity as

veterans, however, probably led many to feel they had a special chance of achieving their demand.

b) The WESL was not the leading force of the Bonus March (except possibly in terms of political development). Their call for the March was in many ways coincidental with the spontaneous growth of the BEF. Nor were they ever in a position to lead more than a small percentage of vets during any part of the Bonus March. The intense red-baiting and paramilitary activity of the Waters clique kept them on the defensive for most of the March. It's possible that they were taken by surprise to the extent that they were unable to formulate any effective courses of action, but without thorough study of WESL propaganda and criticism, this is only conjecture.

c) For the most part, the Bonus Marchers were there solely to demand the payment of the Bonus. Few seemed to question either the nature of the political system or the validity of their military service in World War I—at least not while the March was still going on. In itself, this is fine, but there is no evidence that there was any effort to bring either capitalism or the nature of World War I into question by the WESL.

d) Vets' chauvinism was a strong factor in the co-optation of the Marchers' struggle. More than any other cause, it was chauvinism that allowed Waters and his cohorts to maintain the control they did over the BEF. Certainly, the MP and informant force was a factor, but it is hard to believe that 25,000 plus war veterans, none of them tied down with material possessions, could be that easily cowed. The fact remains that the majority of the BEF followed Waters' sell-out leadership to the end. Vets' chauvinism—the appeal to privilege—when combined with rabid anti-communism, was a potent force in both holding the BEF together and blunting its impact.

e) Regardless of its eventual effect, most participants felt the Bonus March to be a failure. There seems to have been little or no effort made to view the struggle for the Bonus in a long-range perspective. To most, it was seen as a one-shot attempt that failed. Thus, when Roosevelt signed the Bonus into law during the "New Deal", he was in a position to claim credit for it.

#### C. The Historical Importance of the Indochina War in the Development of the Veterans Movement

The Indochina War is the longest major war this country has been involved in. It is also the third deadliest in terms of casualties. A full analysis of this war is impossible here, but some of its unique factors—in terms of the historical experience of this country and its veterans' movements—should be briefly noted. (While the war continues in a comprador form, we are viewing it in the context of organizing U.S. veterans of the war. Therefore, past tense is used.)

1. It was an openly imperialist and neo-colonialist war in nature. It lacked the supportive rationales and legitimate purposes of earlier major wars. Unlike this country's earlier imperialist "interventions", it involved large numbers of draftees and was widely covered in the press.

... a military defeat for the U.S. Because of its protracted nature and peculiarities of the rotation system, many veterans unconsciously realize this. Most veterans, however, do agree that the war was senseless and unnecessary.

The nature of a people's war, and the highly technological nature of the U.S., stripped the Indochina experience of any purpose or mission for most participants. The only logic of the war was that of personal survival.

There was no concurrent mobilization or dislocation of civilian life. In addition, there was little awareness—much less appreciation—of the experiences of returning veterans.

The war was conducted entirely by a career-oriented military. In earlier major wars where large-scale mobilization affected all levels of the military, this one was fought with a standing army provided a professional officer and NCO corps whose interests often totally at odds with those of their troops.

It was accompanied by large-scale social and cultural upheaval—a generation gap, the antiwar movement, Black struggles, the new women's movement. While social and cultural change often accompanies war, the content of these changes is unique.

It was accompanied by a disintegration of the political institutions of this country. With the exception of the Confederacy, it's the only war that no veterans of any of this country's wars have seen their institutions they supposedly fought for discredit themselves in a short period of time.

There was a widespread disintegration of the military from the home front. The forms of personal and collective resistance to the war of the military were so widespread that, for a while at least, many of its components ceased to function. Again, the only exception occurs in the Confederacy.

The enemy was openly communist. In view of the manner in which anti-communism was used against progressive struggles after the war, even though the opposing sides were not communist, it may turn out to be significant. Given the courage and steadfastness of the Vietnamese people, compared with the corruption and brutality of the Saigon regime, this argument may have had no effect on the veterans of this war.

## THE OPPRESSION OF VETERANS

People have needs that must be met if they are to function in society as full and productive human beings. However, throughout the course of history, some groups of people have been systematically denied the resources to meet their needs. Groups that are denied the opportunity to fully meet their needs are being oppressed.

A group is oppressed because it lacks the political power to protect and advance its own interests. In the final analysis, a group's political power is determined by how much control it has over the forces which produce the necessities of life for society. An oppressor group controls enough of the means of production to allow it to meet its own needs, plus some of the needs of others. An oppressor group uses its economic control in the political field to ensure that oppressed groups don't unite to threaten the position of the oppressors. Within this framework, we can look at the oppression of veterans.

First, however, we must make a distinction between oppression and exploitation. Exploitation is the extraction of surplus value from the labor of workers. The working class produces enough to support both itself and the ruling class, but part of what it produces is stolen from it. Exploitation is a relationship between classes. It is rooted in the economic basis of society. Oppression is a relationship between groups of people with different social characteristics, such as race, class, sex, religion, etc. Oppressor groups oppress other groups on the basis of these characteristics. Oppression is an aspect of the political superstructural layer of society. Exploitation and oppression have always existed hand-in-hand throughout history, and they existed long before the present imperialist system. But it is exploitation that is primary. Ruling classes have always initiated and encouraged oppression to maintain their own particular exploitative system.

Most veterans suffer the same exploitation that other members of the working class face in this country. But, they also suffer a form of oppression that is directly related to their participation in the military. Examples of the needs that arise from this form of oppression are: medical treatment for military-related injuries; rehabilitation from military related drug addiction; and freedom from the stigma of bad discharges. The depth of this oppression is measured by the extent to which a society has the resources to meet veterans' legitimate readjustment needs and systematically fails to do so.

The fight against veterans' oppression has both a positive and negative side. The positive side is that veterans will broaden their understanding of the political struggle as well as make material gains that will contribute to their material well-being. The negative side is that veterans may tend to see the struggle to meet their needs as a narrow economist one, apart from the other struggles of the working class and oppressed peoples. There is no reason that this should happen. The productive capacity of advanced capitalism is such that all the legitimate needs of the people of this country could be easily met. What keeps this from taking place is the obsolete structure of capitalist economic relations-

isocialism. It is important that veterans realize that their needs do not have to be met at the expense of those of other groups; that a socialist re-ordering of American society will allow everyone's needs to be satisfied. For this reason we must make a distinction between those benefits necessary for a veteran to readjust to society and those benefits given out to make veterans a privileged or special interest group. If we fail to make this distinction in our political work, we will be, regardless of our intent, strengthening the divisive tendency of veterans' chauvinism.

#### VETERANS' OPPRESSION IN AREAS OF READJUSTMENT

Veterans have legitimate readjustment needs. These needs are not being adequately met, and where there is any attempt to meet them, these attempts are put forward in the guise of privileges, rather than as readjustment needs. The fight for readjustment needs is important, and concrete investigation must be done if we are to lead this fight.

Medical Needs: The VA hospital system is the largest in the country. It should be providing adequate care for the thousands of Vietnam-era veterans with medical problems. But it doesn't. The VA system is set up to meet both the readjustment needs of vets and to perpetuate a privileged vets status. Vets with military-related injuries are treated, plus veterans with non-military-related injuries who cannot afford treatment elsewhere. The treatment of service-connected injuries is a valid readjustment need. But, the admission of vets with non-service-connected injuries is an attempt to reinforce vets privileges. There is no reason for a person to get free medical treatment simply because he or she is a vet. Everyone is entitled to free and decent medical care. All struggles for medical care should stress that medical care is a right for all, not a privilege for some.

The practice of the VA medical system is to emphasize the privilege aspect at the expense of the readjustment aspect. VA hospitals are "primarily oriented toward institutionalized treatment of the chronic diseases of the aged" (chapter 4, p. 73 of Nader's Report on Vietnam era veterans The Discarded Army)

The VA is doing little to meet the needs of veterans with war injuries, and almost nothing to deal with Vietnam era veterans' drug and psychological problems. That the VA is not meeting these readjustment needs is reflected by the reluctance of young vets to enter VA hospitals in the first place and by their high rate of discharges from VA hospitals against the advice of the medical staff.

Education: The purpose of a veterans' education bill should be to let a veteran have an opportunity to go to school and learn a skill. The GI Bill for WWII veterans allowed vets to do this by providing for full tuition payments plus living expenses. The present GI Bill doesn't allow vets the same opportunity because it pays a small monthly sum that doesn't even cover living expenses, much less tuition. Thus, vets must have some other source of income if they are to go to school. The effect of these low educational benefits is to deny educational opportunities to large numbers of vets. The VA likes to brag about how the percentage of veterans

using the GI Bill is now the highest ever. What they don't brag about is the reality that many vets who sign up once for the bill can't afford to stay in school and must drop out before their education is completed.

Employment: This is the problem facing the largest number of vets. It is also the one that is most tied in with veterans' oppression as part of the working class. And it also interweaves with all the other forms of oppression that veterans face that are specifically connected to the status of being a veteran, such as bad discharges, education, etc. The basic cause of veterans' special oppression in the employment area is that vets have lost time in the job market. This loss has not been made up to veterans in any other way, except for the small numbers of vets who have been able to apply the skills they learned in the military to civilian life. The purpose of readjustment benefits should be to bring vets up to the level of their peers who have not lost time in the military. The biggest problem is that vets' peers are also in a bad situation as far as employment is concerned. Figuring out strategies that just bring vets back to the level of the rest of the working class, without putting vets ahead of other people is a very difficult task.

Bad Discharges: This is one of the clearest areas of veterans' oppression. A bad discharge stems directly from military service. It affects vets and no one else. It is one of the most destructive areas of veterans oppression because it can affect a vet's medical, educational and employment opportunities. The arbitrary and racist manner in which discharges are given is something we all know of (Although many vets and the public at large have only a vague awareness of the true nature of the discharge system.) Bad discharges are very important to organize around because they point up two very important points: one, the concept of "readjustment" and the difficulty that many vets have in reintegrating themselves into society, and two, the true nature of the war and the rebellion and regression that it caused in the military.

#### VVAW/WSO's WORK IN READJUSTMENT

Our organization has, in the past, recognized the need to help veterans readjust, and has struggled against the presentation of veterans as a privileged group. Our struggle against veterans' chauvinism has ranged from the throwing away of medals at the Capitol steps to the recent struggle against A.V.N. This struggle against vet chauvinism has been a difficult one, and it has not been without its setbacks.

Similarly, our struggles for the readjustment needs of veterans have also been both successes and failures. We have never been able to form a solid national program to deal with PVS. Some local chapters, such as the N.Y. City chapter, have had success around PVS rap groups. Other chapters, Buffalo among them, have had lots of problems with their PVS groups.

We have not had much success in dealing with veterans' employment problems. Some vets have gotten jobs through EEA-type programs, but these jobs only help a small number of vets, they are often "scab" jobs, and they have co-opted some people, as these jobs are designed to do.

The readjustment area where we have done the most work is DUP. Our success here has also been mixed. In San Francisco, and some other areas, chapters have been swamped with work, and yet have not had a corresponding increase in membership or activity among vets with bad discharges. This is in spite of the fact that our political line to DUP has always been an anti-imperialist one. Yet DUP projects have been run mainly as service projects, reinforcing vet chauvinism by giving vets the image that we are similar to traditional veteran groups that help vets get "bennies". In some ways, the "War on the VA" fits the same pattern. The political line is nominally anti-imperialist, but the actual practice of the "war" will again put us in the position of attempting to deliver the "bennies" to the vets - "bennies" we won't be able to deliver.

#### WHAT IS VETERANS' CHAUVINISM

Chauvinism is the defense of a privileged position or status in society. Unchallenged, it is a tendency that sets back revolutionary growth. The material basis of chauvinism is privilege-political, economic and cultural- so deeply entrenched in the superstructure of society that its effects are rarely realized or articulated. For instance, the ideology of sexism-male supremacy-is the conscious manifestation of male chauvinism; like the tip of an iceberg, it is the visible portion of a massive accumulation of individual, social and historical conditioning. It is entirely possible to consciously repudiate a bourgeois ideology such as sexism and still not deal with its chauvinistic foundation. An example is to say that imperialism is the root cause of sexism. This both ignores the historical dimension of women's struggles and seriously underestimates the need for a truly revolutionary transformation of society.

Chauvinism is not an invention of the Imperialists who control this society. In most cases, it pre-dates the Capitalist epoch. It does, however, provide a most effective means for the ruling class to divide the working class and its closest allies along lines of privilege. This is done through the manipulation of certain groups by making them economically and socially dependent on existing political relationships. Prior to the advent of advanced Capitalism, such privilege was highly valued in society. Now, just as there is no justification for the existence of class exploitation or any form of oppression, there is no justifiable rationale for privilege or chauvinism.

Historically, veterans have been a group that the ruling class has sought to keep in a privileged position. Among the means used to do this are: the official promotion of exclusively veterans groups; the granting of legitimate readjustment demands in such a way and context so as to perpetuate the sense of privilege; and by distortion and glorification of the military experience. By these means, an image of veterans as being more patriotic and self-sacrificing than others, as well as more deserving, is maintained.

This process is often initiated by veterans themselves. In addition to the need to join together to fight against the forms of physical and mental oppression particular to veterans, there is a very real desire to preserve the friendships and camaraderie that stem from the service. By both direct political manipulation and by



...ing those "leaders" of the vets' movement whose class outlook closely matches their own, the ruling class is able to channel every real need into privilege. An example of the former is a program which gave Vietnam Era veterans job preference in governmental jobs (but only under conditions that effectively made second class workers and scabs). Of the latter, the way <sup>USA</sup> liberal politicians tried to advance John Kerry as the man for VVAW in 1971. The two can combine. The formation of the American Legion is illustrative of how representatives of the ruling class—all officers of World War I—deliberately appeal to veterans' chauvinism in an effort to keep the majority of vets from acting in their own class interests.

The Veterans Administration, incorrectly labeled the "point of no return" of Vietnam Era vets by some in VVAW/WSO, is itself an agent of the government encouraging veterans' chauvinism by the promise of privilege. Stung by the militance of the 1932 Bonus Army and the Depression, the ruling class moved during World War II to refuse any potentially revolutionary situation involving returning veterans. The primary rationale for the VA was that it would give returned veterans—and only vets—a chance to become "productive" citizens in the postwar years and thus give them a stake in preserving the political status quo. Eleanor Roosevelt in 1942 that returning veterans might become "a dangerous force in our midst" and that the government needed to "strengthen our economic system so that the opportunity is open to them on their return, or we may reap the whirlwind." By creating the VA and giving it control over almost all veterans' programs in addition by linking it with the reactionary veterans' "service" organizations (the only ones chartered by Congress) and the military, the government has tried to structure the means of doling out veterans' privileges to its own advantage.

Programs or tactics aimed at organizing veterans around their real readjustment needs must take privilege and chauvinism into account. Otherwise, they may well have the objective effect of reinforcing these tendencies. After World War II, the demands of the GI's for jobs caused about 3,000,000 women workers to be laid off, numerous daycare centers to close, and a propaganda campaign aimed at convincing the women workers their place was in the home. Because of the strong appeal of chauvinism, few veterans' workers questioned or challenged this move. If that many had, they would have been thrown out of work under any other circumstances, and their protests would almost surely result.

What holds true today. Penthouse magazine has been running a series of well-documented and angry articles about the shabby pay and treatment of the Vietnam Era veteran. In many ways, this series is somewhat like ours. Yet, this series is most likely a deliberate appeal to chauvinism in an effort to keep Vietnam Era vets from forging alliances with other groups. The series coordinator is Carl McCarden, identified in the articles as a Vietnam vet and former head of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs in New York City. What the articles fail to mention is that McCarden is also a Black career Major, currently on leave of absence from his last post as an economics instructor at West Point. In Vietnam, he was an officer in the Special Forces and, at one point, a special advisor to Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker

His current function with the Penthouse series is almost certainly an extension of his counter-insurgency duties in Indochina. The appeal of veterans' chauvinism, enforced here by an appeal to male chauvinism, extends even to militant protests directed at the VA.

Nor is McCarden's case unique. The lesson is clear. Any agitational work this organization does, without moving directly to expose and smash privilege and chauvinism, runs the risk of objectively serving the same ends that lackeys such as McCarden serve.

#### IS THERE A SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT OF VETERANS

This section will try to do a short sum-up of what our investigation into the history of veterans' movements and our analysis of this history and present conditions tell us about the existence and possibility of a spontaneous veterans movement today. Our reading of history has revealed that spontaneous vets movements have arisen after every major war. Within approximately five years following the end of the particular war, the vets movements have split into two tendencies. One tendency is for veterans to become involved in other struggles as their alienation from the war lessened and as their alienation from the war lessened and as other forms of oppression became primary in their lives. Examples of this are the role of vets in settling the west and in the labor movements after the two world wars. The other tendency is for veterans to be coopted into veteran privilege groups like the American Legion who promote veterans as a special interest group.

We see no divergence from the pattern discussed above in veterans' struggles today. We think that the last few years have seen many significant expressions of spontaneous veteran activity. The founding of this organization was largely spontaneous and one of the major factors, if not the main factor, for the success of Dewey Canyon III was its spontaneous nature. However, spontaneous actions by veterans are decreasing, not increasing. Dialectics teaches us that many small, quantitative changes eventually become so numerous that they precipitate a qualitative change. History teaches us that veterans movements of the past have been composed of many small upsurges, but that these upsurges have never caused a qualitative change in the character of veterans activities into something that could be called a revolutionary veterans' movement. Vets today have played significant roles in struggles such as Londstoun and in the New York City Post Offices. We do not think that the role of vets in these struggles is any different from the previous struggles of vets against their economic exploitation rather than their veterans oppression. To appeal to people involved in these struggles on the basis of their veterans status is in fact a divisive approach. To fabricate a veterans movement out of a few quantitative-type activities would be reformist and could cause us to tail behind the masses, because when workers who happen to be vets really begin to move, we will be left behind if we are still trying to appeal to them as veterans.

As we have discussed previously, the Indochina vet is different in many ways from previous vets. These differences may result in a qualitatively new movement among veterans. If this is so, our present analysis may be incorrect. But, our best efforts to date lead us to conclude that there is no spontaneous movement of veterans in this country at this time.

## THE UNITED FRONT

The purpose of this section of our paper is to analyze the relationship between a United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI) and the struggle presently being waged in our organization. Although we will examine various aspects of United Fronts, we are primarily concerned with the tactical form or structure of UFAI. Owing to this fact the investigation being conducted here is purposely limited and by no means should be considered an exhaustive or complete study.

In order to realize this purpose, we will attempt to answer what we think are the basic questions concerning United Fronts in general and specifically the developing UFAI in this country. We will structure this paper, as closely as possible, in accordance with the order of the questions listed below. These questions are:

1. What is a United Front?
2. What is a coalition?
3. What is a United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI)?
4. What is the purpose of a UFAI?
5. Does a UFAI exist today?
6. How is a UFAI formed?
7. Can a UFAI exist without a party?
8. What is the role of the party in UFAI?
9. What is the difference between the work of a mass anti-imperialist organization, a cadre organization and a communist organization?
10. What is the role of communists in a mass anti-imperialist organization?
11. Are we being "U.S. exceptionalists" by putting forward the "minority" position?
12. Is constituency organizing the correct tactic of UFAI in the U.S. today?
13. Does VVAW/WSC hurt the formation of the UFAI by taking the so-called "minority" position?
14. Was the July 1-4 Washington D.C. demo a United Front action?

(Numbers 5-6 are incorporated into the paper and are not listed as such formally).

### 1. What is a United Front?

A United Front is an alliance; the unity of all classes and strata who are in direct or have sharp contradictions with monopoly capitalism. It must be led by the proletariat and its advanced contingent, a genuine communist party.

### 2. What is a coalition?

A coalition is a temporary alliance of political organizations for a specific purpose.

### 3. What is a United Front Against Imperialism?

The plan for socialist revolution, the UFAI is the uniting of all forces (classes and strata) who are in direct or have sharp contradictions with monopoly capitalism. It is an alliance which can and has developed on a variety of levels and scales. This question of a variety of levels and scales will be dealt with in some detail as the paper progresses. Such alliances are constructed for the mutual self interests of those classes and strata, including

... various organizations, groups and individuals involved in  
particular struggle around which the United Front is formed.

What is the purpose of the UFAI?

The United Front strategy for proletarian revolution means that  
the UF is the over-all plan for bringing about the destruction of  
the rule of monopoly capitalism in the U.S. and the establishment  
of the political rule of the working class; the dictatorship of  
the proletariat. In a word, the UF strategy is the plan for  
proletarian revolution in the U.S.

There are three basic ingredients necessary for proletarian  
revolution through the strategy of the UF. They are: a true  
communist party, the mass movement of all who can be united to  
defeat U.S. imperialism and armed struggle to smash the bourgeoisie.

The first ingredient is the "advanced detachment" of the proletariat,  
the "general staff" or the "leading organization", in short, the  
party. The objective conditions at this time make building a UFAI  
very difficult due to the lack of a party to lead it. This is  
not to say that because there is no party that the mass movement  
will stagnate and die. The party itself cannot take the place of  
the mass movement nor can the mass movement spontaneously bring  
about the party. The two will develop hand in hand.

In the past, both nationally and internationally UFs have arisen  
without the direction of a proletarian party based on the ideology  
of Marxism-Leninism. The movement from which many of us developed,  
the anti-war movement, provides an excellent example of an uncon-  
scious formation of a UF. Numerous organizations and groups, with  
varying class differences with monopoly capitalism, arose and  
were able, with varying degrees of success, to unite for a common  
goal—the end of US involvement in Indochina. Many victories can  
be pointed to as a result. The material assistance rendered to  
the Vietnamese and their leadership, the awakening of significant  
sectors of the American people, particularly the students, youth  
and minorities, to the experience of politics in America. And,  
finally, the instilling in the masses of deep and genuine feelings  
against foreign military involvement.

The shortcomings of the anti-war movement, however, are today  
painfully evident. For, having failed to develop under the guidance  
of the working class, its political leadership and that leadership's  
political ideology, much of the movement came to be dominated by  
the "left" wing of the bourgeoisie, i.e., the Kennedys, McGovern,  
and others. Without conscious proletarian leadership the masses  
remained in large numbers undeducated to the real nature of the  
war and how it is the very nature of capitalism to make war,  
the ultimate form of oppression. This lack of proletarian leader-  
ship led to the co-optation of the movement, its strangulation,  
decline and near total collapse.

Albania provides an example of masses of people without a party  
banding together in common alliance against the invasion of the  
Fascists. This situation, however, proved to be very different than  
the one just alluded to. The Albanian Party of Labor was able to  
unify within two years after the onslaught, provide the United  
Front with direction and lead it to victory over both the fascists  
and eventually over their own bourgeoisie.

The second ingredient of proletarian revolution in order to implement this strategy for revolution is that there must be mass movements which actively oppose imperialism. Stalin says that, "Political strategy, like tactics, is concerned with the working class movement". But the working class movement itself consists of two elements: 1) the objective, or spontaneous element and, 2) the subjective or conscious element". In other words, the concrete repressive conditions that exist are what cause any spontaneous movement in any given situation, irrespective of the will of the masses or the desire of any particular organizational leadership. This means that even though it is the duty of communists and/or any other people in leadership positions to propagandize and educate around certain injustices, they should not and must not attempt to create a spontaneous up-rising of the masses. This leadership should respond to the needs of the people, not encourage the people to respond to what they think their needs are. It is up to communists to do the education necessary to help the masses become aware of their needs, but they should not push the masses towards change through action until there is conscious awareness of their needs and the masses are determined to carry the struggle forward.

The subjective or conscious side of the movement, again according to Stalin, "consists of the reflection in the minds of the workers of the movement; it is the conscious and deliberate movement of the proletariat towards a definite aim". Before this can take place, assuming there is a real spontaneous movement occurring, there must be, as Dimitroff stated, "Unity of Action". This, as Snake pointed out, is a "pre-requisite for the establishment of a united front, not the united front itself". Does this mean we are incapable of building toward the formation of a United Front? On the contrary. But we must correctly assess the situation as it really exists. Obviously, much scientific investigation as well as mass practice must be our goals for the future. We cannot assume there exists, nor can we create a mass upsurge, of any specific grouping (constituency) simply because we would like to see that be. We will elaborate on whether or not we see a mass upsurge of veterans later in the paper. An accurate historical and material analysis must always be our guide in understanding what direction our practice will take us. We must move forward, not toward sectarianism, narrowness and opportunism. At this point in time, we see the UPAI developing in more or less loose organizational forms as long as there is no party to lead it. This places more responsibility on the mass organizations; a responsibility that is ultimately that of the party.

The third need of the proletariat is that of armed struggle. It seems evident that when the masses of people in this country rise up in anger against the repressive nature of capitalism, that these capitalists are not simply going to give in and allow the people to take over. Without exception, every socialist country in the world has had to engage in armed struggle to finally defeat capitalism. We cannot expect the situation in this country to be any different. Obviously, the time is not yet ripe, but we should clearly understand the necessity of such action and the need for the proletariat to grasp their historic role.

5. How is a United Front Against Imperialism formed?

First, it should be pointed out that there are two-stage and one-stage revolutions, depending on "the level of productive forces, the essential determining element in the content and form of class struggle". ("The Weapon of Theory", Amilcar Cabral, speech given at the Tricontinental, 1966). This means that under imperialism, those which function primarily as exploiters, the developed nations, will see one-stage revolutions, and those who are primarily exploited, the underdeveloped nations, in the main Third World nations under colonial or neo-colonial domination, will see two stages: the first being liberation, the second being the socialist revolution.

The United Front Against Imperialism and Foreign Aggression is the strategy for revolution in colonial and third world countries. A two-stage revolution must occur. This first stage of the revolution can and does include the national bourgeoisie and the national labor aristocracy. But the main force is the proletariat and peasantry. The first stage consists of the ouster of the foreign aggressor, that being imperialism, and any remnants of feudalism that remains, plus the implementation of a new democratic state.

A classic example of a UFAI is found in China from 1936-1945, where the Chinese Communists Party, under the leadership of Mao Tse-Tung, was able to unite the working class, peasantry, national bourgeoisie and even certain elements of the comprador class to oppose Japanese aggression. In the first stage, the Chinese communists were able to unite with Chiang Kai-Shek to throw out Japanese imperialism. In order to move into the second stage, these same comprador bourgeois forces and the U.S. government allies had to be overthrown in order to establish socialism.

In this country there can be only a one stage revolution to achieve socialism. The United Front, which is the strategy for this one stage revolution, must exclude all elements who would compromise with the capitalists (bourgeoisie). This includes the labor aristocracy, the Black bourgeoisie and the hard core lumpen. This UF is an alliance of classes and strata to oppose the monopoly capitalist class. In the U.S. this means concretely uniting all those who can be united to oppose imperialism which is the rule of monopoly capitalism. Today we live in an epoch of wars of national liberation, causing Mao to note in his statement of May 20 that "A new upsurge in the struggle against U.S. imperialism is now emerging in the world. Revolution is the main trend in the world today." Here in the heart of imperialism, the vast majority of people can be united in opposition to the same system which oppresses people on five continents. This is possible because the fundamental contradiction is also the principle one; that being between the working class and the monopoly capitalist class. In order for the working class and oppressed nations to achieve political power, however, it must win and maintain the support of all those oppressed by imperialism. This includes as primary allies the poor farmers, the masses of wage slaves, blacks (we do not have unity around whether or not there is an oppressed black nation), oppressed national minorities, masses of working class youth and women, the reserve army of the unemployed; and as secondary allies, small business owners, the urban petty bourgeoisie, professionals and the intelligentsia. However, before this task can

be achieved scientific analysis of the concrete conditions in this country must be undertaken, understanding both the unique conditions in this country and that theory is our guide to action.

5. What is the role of the Party in United Front Against Imperialism?

"Without the Communist Party it will be impossible to consolidate our victories, minimize our losses and overcome setbacks, to sustain activity through all the periods of ebb in the struggle, to take full advantage of weaknesses and contradictions in the enemy camp and to wage a thorough fight for the United Front and, through the United Front, for the dictatorship of the proletariat." Pg. 55, The Red Papers, 1, 2, & 3.

And from a proposal concerning the general line of the International Communist movement, the author of the central committee of the Communist Party of China in reply to the letter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. March 30, 1963.

"...the proletarian party must under the present circumstances actively lead the working class and the working people in struggles to oppose monopoly capital, to defend democratic rights, to oppose the menace of fascism, to improve living conditions, to oppose imperialist arms expansion and war preparations, to defend world peace and actively support revolutionary struggles of oppressed nations..."

"...the proletarian parties in imperialist or capitalist countries must maintain their own ideological, political and organizational independence in leading revolutionary struggles. At the same time they must unite all the forces that can be united and build a broad united front against monopoly capital and against the imperialist politics of aggression and war

"While actively leading immediate struggles, Communists in the capitalist countries should link them with the struggle for long range and general interests, educate the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit, ceaselessly raise their political consciousness and undertake the historical task of proletarian revolution."

7. What is the difference between the work of mass anti-imperialist organizations, cadre organizations, and communist organizations?

The work that mass anti-imperialist organizations do is to actively oppose imperialist oppression and to raise the level of consciousness of its membership and base from the recognition of individual oppression to the understanding of other people's forms of oppression, the need for a UPAI to oppose imperialist oppression and to oppose anti-communist tendencies.

Cadre is the nucleus around which an expanded organization can be built. The work of a cadre organization that is anti-imperialist and not communist is the same as that of a mass organization except that the two organizations differ in structure, and discipline and the avenues open to membership in the decision-making process that determines the political ideas and practice of the organization.

The primary work of Communist organizations, now and at any time a Communist Party does not exist, is to build a Communist Party.



"Without question, communists must be involved in mass work. We must never strive to narrow down mass actions. The mass movement will not wait for us. But in engaging in mass work, in fighting to win over the advanced elements to Marxism-Leninism and fighting for the leadership of the proletariat, we must at all times remember that the wider the movement, the more necessary the building of the party, for without the party who is going to lead the mass movement—the bourgeoisie!" p. 37, Black Liberation Struggle, the Black Workers Congress and Proletarian Revolution, 1974.

8. What is the role of Communists in a mass organization? Again, to quote Mao, "Our cultural workers must serve the people with great enthusiasm and devotion, and they must link themselves with the masses, not divorce themselves from the masses. In order to do so they must get in accordance with the needs and wishes of the masses. All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively, they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. We should wait patiently. We should not make the change until, through our work, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. Otherwise, we shall isolate ourselves from the masses. Unless they are conscious and willing, any kind of work that requires their participation will turn out to be a mere formality and fail... There are two principles here: one is the actual needs of the masses rather than what we fancy they need; the other is the wishes of the masses, who must make up their own minds instead of our making up their minds for them."

9. Are we being "U.S. exceptionalist" by putting forth the so-called "minority" position?

"U.S. exceptionalism" is a term for the idealist notion that the concrete material conditions that exist in the U.S. are different than those of Albania, China, the Soviet Union and so on and therefore the theories of Marx and Lenin no longer apply. We see that the concrete conditions that exist in this country are different from concrete conditions of the USSR, but we firmly support Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung thought and the application of these theories for making revolution in the U.S.

In the 1940's, when the task of the working class was to participate in the world-wide struggle against fascism and to maintain its independence from the bourgeoisie to struggle against that bourgeoisie. ~~Earl Browder~~ helped develop full-scale revisionist capitulationist line that eventually resulted in the CP's dissolution in 1944. Browder's line revived "American exceptionalism" and denied the application of the laws of Marxism-Leninism to American conditions. Thus, he betrayed the proletariat. Today there are attempts to revive this idealist line. Although we certainly believe that the concrete conditions in this country at this time are different, "new leftism" and neo-revisionism, which have dominated the mass movements of the 60's must be refuted.

10. Is organizing around the needs of specific groups of people the correct tactic of the UFAI in the U.S. today? The question of "special groups" organizing is not a strategic question, but rather one of tactics. I.E., Does it move the struggle as a whole forward to organize around the needs of specific groups of people?

We think that in cases where there is a real upsurge of masses of people within any given specific group of people, then the answer is yes.



Decisions reached around such tactical questions must be as a result of scientific analysis based on the concrete conditions that exist, in reality. This decision must not be arrived at simply on the evidence of "this or that experience" or the "success" of "this or that action", i.e., wars on the VA. Only by such scientific analysis can the idealistic errors of empiricism, pragmatism and subjectivity be avoided.

11. Was the July 1-4 D.C. Demonstration a United Front? First, we must examine the various groups represented and determine if the D.C. demonstration was.

1. A uniting of all forces (classes and strata) who are in direct or sharp contradiction with monopoly capitalism and,
2. Was the alliance constructed for the mutual self-interests of these classes and strata?

Who was represented at the demonstration? Members of VVAW/WSO, the Revolutionary Union and the Student Brigade, Indochina Solidarity Committee and traces of other leftist groups. This is obviously not representative of all classes and strata. There were few, if any, Blacks and other minorities, wage-slaves, professionals and trade unionists, the core of the mass movement. We would say that the first criterion was definitely not realized.

Would we say that the demands: Decent Benefits for All Vets, Universal Unconditional Amnesty, Single Type Discharge, End All Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol, Implement the Agreements, and Kick Nixon Out were in the mutual self-interests of those represented. The answer, insofar as we see these demands as class issues, is yes.

We think the D.C. Demo properly fits into the category of a coalition - a temporary alliance of political organizations for a specific purpose.

The NO analysis of the DC demo leads us to the conclusion that the NO not only incorrectly analyzed that demo, but that they have a rather hazy interpretation of United Fronts in general.

12. Does VVAW/WSO hurt the formation of the UFAL by taking the so-called "minority position"?

Today, the decline of U.S. imperialism is accelerating. Its contention with Soviet social imperialism is intensifying, and it is in a deepening economic crisis. The monopoly capitalists are shifting the burden of the crises onto the backs of the working class at home and the oppressed nations abroad, attempting to develop fascism and preparing for imperialist war against the oppressed nations. The task facing the working class movement is to fight against the shifting of the economic crises onto its back, to fight against imperialism and prepare for revolution. The establishment of a communist party is of vital importance here to give direction not only to VVAW/WSO, but to the mass movement in general.

The United Front Against Imperialism is the strategy that must be implemented in order to achieve revolution. We do not propose that we are in a position to unequivocally analyze the correct tactics to be implemented within this basic strategy of a UF. This is the duty of the Party. What we do propose is a method, that, being dialectical, through which we may better understand our organizational development through a world view as opposed to a "Veterans' View", thus making us more capable of clearly understanding the oppression of all people as an anti-imperialist organization.

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George Dimitroff, addressing the Seventh World Congress in 1935, spoke of the impending nature of fascism at that point in time and laid an applicable foundation for the building of a United Front Against Fascism. We believe that this was a correct analysis of tactics at that time.

A UFAF, as typified by Dimitroff, is a strategic response to the concrete conditions of the onslaught of fascism. The tactical form of the organs making up the U.F. were also due to the concrete conditions of the time. These tactical forms were developed by a dialectical process. We must utilize this same method as we analyze the present situation. It is pure pragmatism to copy something simply because it worked in the past.

The Great Depression provided revolutionaries with the opportunity to propagandize and politicize for social struggle against capitalism. Instead, the capitalists were able to overcome the antagonisms of the people with massive social reform programs. One of those was the establishment of the VA after WWII. Ever since, with the exception of war years, capitalism has coopted more and more of the masses every time it grants fringe benefits to a certain rebellious group. In the absence of a unifying revolutionary organization, the party, it is the history of the last quarter century that special interests groups have concentrated on winning concessions for themselves.

While reforms are not necessarily counter-revolutionary, it depends upon whether we allow ourselves to manipulate people with these programs by not pointing out constantly the very nature of reform as a method of co-optation. For instance, the establishment of the miners for democracy under the direction of Arnold Miller was a step forward for miners, specifically and workers in general. However, Miller must be seen as a vacillating liberal at best. His programs cannot be viewed as an end, but rather only a step toward the eventual ownership of the means of production. Independent organizers must not allow their roles to be liquidated. Miller was only the first step in the total democratization of unions as a stage toward the building for revolution. There was a real spontaneous uprising of miners, thus bringing about the demise of Tony Boyle and the improvement of basic conditions for miners in general.

Is there then a spontaneous uprising of veterans in this country? This is obviously an area where much investigation needs to be done. However, some conclusions can be drawn at this time. We can see historically that spontaneous uprisings of veterans occurs directly after the cessation of major wars (see, History of Veterans, this paper.) and tends to tail off after 4-5 years. This, coupled with the fact that through our day-to-day practice it is becoming increasingly obvious that most veterans do not see themselves as primarily being oppressed as veterans. Rather, from our experience, veterans are not up-rising because they experience basically the same oppression as most working class people. The only exception to this phenomenon was the Bonus March, fully 15 years after World War I. However, vets were not organizable as a constituency because their demands were economist and therefore laid no basis for real organizing possibilities.

Again, we realize that conditions are different in different areas of the country. However, we think that at this time, we can accurately generalize that to focus on organizing veterans would be disastrous to the continuation of our organization as a fighting ally of the people.

...that an organization...  
line. Whether it recognizes it as such or not, the ideological  
line of an organization is the foundation of its political line,  
the viewpoint and method with which it analyzes conditions and arrives  
at its political line, tactics and policies. Therefore, the  
political line of an organization is of paramount importance.

The fundamental premise of the dialectical materialist theory of know-  
ledge and the fundamental dividing line between the two great camps  
of philosophy, materialism and idealism, is whether or not one  
recognizes the objective existence of the material world, independent  
of man's will, that will can only reflect the material world, whether  
one recognizes the existence of matter, of objective reality and  
objective truth standing outside one's consciousness is the corner-  
stone of materialism and of the dialectical materialist theory of  
knowledge.

The point is that dialectics cannot be learned solely through thought  
and study. It must be learned by putting our thoughts into practice;  
practice around the concrete conditions that exist within any given  
circumstance and then examining the theory and practice. Stalin  
says that "theory is the experience of the working class movement  
in all countries taken in its general aspects" and summed up from  
that experience.

At this point in time, the first practical step that a revolutionary  
can take toward internalizing the dialectical method is to strive  
to understand the tremendous historical developments which have taken  
place on both sides: capitalism and the present state of imperialism  
and the development of socialism.

Special methods and means of approach suited to the concrete  
conditions prevailing in these countries must be learned, mastered  
and applied..." Dimitroff, United Front Against Fascism, p. 46

We think that at the present time, especially in lieu of the fact  
that no Party exists to help us with the task of implementing correct  
tactics within the development of a UFAI, we should choose a world  
view.

"In the present situation, sectarianism, self-satisfied sectarianism,  
as we designate it...more than anything else impedes our struggle  
for the realization of the United Front. Sectarianism, satisfied  
with its doctrinaire narrowness, its divorcement from the real  
life of the masses, satisfied with its simplified methods of  
solving the most complex problems of the working class movement  
on the basis of stereotyped schemes..." Dimitroff, United Front  
Against Fascism, p. 85.

It is not to say that reform movements are backward or counter-  
revolutionary. We will discuss this point shortly. We do not see  
anything for vets benefits as reformist, but simply that we correctly  
justify our priorities through scientific analysis. We must con-  
stantly remind ourselves of the differences between a bourgeois  
outlook and a socialist outlook, "the former being the social irres-  
ponsibility of putting economics in command of politics or the latter  
being the social responsibility of putting politics in command of  
economics"... James and Grace Bogs, June 1974.

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No. Loc.

Although we would prefer that the majority of our membership accept the UFAI concept, we realize that the nature of a mass organization only dictates that members have unity around the recognition of oppression that they are all experiencing. The commitment of advanced elements of our organization should be to educate the members from the minimum program of recognition of oppression to the maximum program of the United Front Against Imperialism.

### ocus and Base

A focus is a central point, a center of activity, attraction or attention. For a mass organization in the anti-imperialist movement, the political focus has to encompass both the minimum and maximum program. Failure for it to do so leaves a mass organization without the ability to move the masses from one to the other.

What is the base of a political organization? This is a question which has not been concretely addressed in the struggle now taking place within VVAW-WSO. The positions put forward by many people suggest that base can be equated with membership. This is incorrect, especially within a mass organization where there is no clear and universally applied definition of what qualifies someone for membership. The base of an organization is made up of not only its membership, but it includes the segments whose needs it serves and more specifically those people who relate to the organization through the political activities it conducts. In other words, and applied to VVAW-WSO, those people who relate to the organized activity, either nationally or locally, be they specific projects, educational events, or mass actions have to be recognized as part of our base. The programs and decisions we make have to not only represent but serve their interests and those of the broader segments of society who it is possible for us to move.

This definition of the base of an organization or any political grouping becomes clearer when applied to other forms; for example a communist party or a united front. Is the base of a communist party its membership? Obviously not! The base of a communist party is the proletariat and those who embrace proletarian ideology. Is the base of the United Front those organizations and individuals who participate in it in an organized fashion? Again, obviously not! The base of a United Front is the classes and stratas whose interests it serves and who look to it for leadership.

There is a dialectical relationship between the focus and base in the development of any organization. The N.O. says that our focus will determine our base. This is incorrect and a denial of that dialectical development. Any organization's base will determine its focus, which when implemented in practice will determine the development of the base. Historically, for VVAW-WSO, we originally had a veterans base which took on an anti-war focus. This veterans based organization took on an anti-war focus because U.S. imperialism in S.E. Asia was one of the sharpest and clearest contradictions in the material conditions of veterans lives. This anti-war focus drew non-veteran anti-war elements into the organization and broadened our base. This broader base brought a wider range of social practice into the organization which has led to the development of a conscious anti-imperialist focus. Class-conscious elements are developing within the organization as a result of our day-to-day practice around the struggle against imperialism at home and abroad. The dialectical progression from base to focus, implemented through practice to broader base to broader focus has developed the organization beyond the point where we can say we have a veterans and G.I. base.

Seen within this light, it is clear that no adequate analysis of the actual base of our organization has been made. Even as applied to our membership, we see that the N.O. analysis is inaccurate. We see the largest definable part of our membership being people who were involved in the anti-war movement and developed anti-imperialist consciousness and politics. Within this segment of the membership, the largest definable group is veterans.

Understanding the dialectical relationship between base and focus, it is clear that to take up a focus on vets and G.I.'s at this time will: 1) be a step backwards from the antiimperialist focus which we have developed, 2) be a mechanical application of a focus resulting from an incorrect analysis of the base, and 3) cut us off from the social practice that has led to the development of our anti-imperialist politics.

"Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, class struggle, and scientific experiment."

Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?  
Mao Tse Tung, May 1963

## THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Any objective analysis of the goals and tasks facing the anti-imperialist movement, or any sections of it, has to include an understanding of the conditions of the imperialist system, the make-up of the forces opposed to it and what the major trends in the world today are. We recognize our limitations in summing this up at this point either as a chapter or an organization, because it's a task that we have not taken up in a scientific way. This effort was completely lacking in the position put forward by the NO. This has been a serious failure in the development of a clear two-line struggle. This is a rejection of the responsibility for investigation and study that falls to anyone who puts forward a political position.

A further understanding of the forces in the world today can only be reached through the development of our theory through practice and struggle. We hope that this will spark a dialogue that will carry forward the internal political education of our organization. This is not to advocate that VVAW/WSO develop a line on these questions as that is the role of a communist organization. We see that VVAW/WSO must remain a mass organization and that if it fails to carry forward political education among both its membership and its base it is sure to stagnate.

As we look to the world situation, we can see that revolution is the major trend. From the nations under colonial and neo-colonial domination to the bastions of imperialism itself, this system is being forced to take the defensive. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, where its exploitation is most brutal and its oppression most severe. The peoples of the world are rising up against this super exploitation, particularly in the most exploited sector, the Third World. Third World struggles for liberation cut imperialism off from its markets and primary sources of cheap labor and raw materials, destroying its ability to expand.

In order to finance their defensive efforts and maintain profit, the imperialist powers must step up their attacks on poor and working people within their own borders. The brunt of these attacks are borne by the oppressed nationalities, women, youth and old people. Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Asian and Native American peoples face disproportionately high unemployment as they are the last to be hired and the first fired. This special oppression is perpetuated by the use of racism which enables the exploiters to divide the working class. Women are held as a reserve to be manipulated in and out of the labor force, at the worst conditions and lowest wages, to serve the interests of the ruling class. The use of sexism maintains women in their role as housekeepers and child care workers as well. Prisons and the military serve as receptacles for alienated working class youth who feel that they have no other prospects in their dismal futures. These conditions point clearly to the key struggles for the anti-imperialist movement to take up. The struggle will be hard and long, but the prospects are bright.

The way that the NO proposes that VVAW/WSO link up with these struggles does not express the genuine solidarity that we have with them. Only as this solidarity is strengthened will the anti-imperialist movement develop into a force capable of smashing the imperialist system.

As we work to combat racism and sexism we have to recognize that for Third World people and women being in the military may not be the primary contradiction that they have with the imperialist system. If we organize in a way that fails to grapple with those primary contradictions, we will fail to concretely link ourselves to those struggles, fail to build solidarity in the anti-imperialist movement and remove ourselves from the social practice needed to combat the tendencies of racism and sexism within ourselves. The position put forward by the National Office reduces dealing with racism and sexism to questions of expediency in base building. Racism and sexism are the twin pillars of bourgeois ideology that serve to divide the working class. The fact that there are Third World people and women in the military means that we must recognize the double oppression of these people and organize in a way that will build solidarity among all oppressed G.I.'s. It does not mean as the NO states, that we will be forced to deal with racism and sexism in an substantive way. We think the NO is correct that because racism is used by the military it will force the membership of VVAW/WSO "to begin dealing with racist practice and ideas in the same way that the struggle around women in the organization has lead the membership to deal with sexist practice and ideas." (our underline) Although the membership is beginning to develop some understanding of what sexist practice and ideas are, the way in which they have been "dealt with" has often been mechanical not political. We must combat sexism as a political ideology, not simply as a barrier to recruitment. This means not only supporting women in their fight against their oppression, but attacking sexism as a bourgeois ideology which serves to divide those who could be united in opposition to imperialism. Similarly, we must combat racism in a way that does more than deal with surface manifestations, although these are important struggles to take up. We have to combat racism not only as it affects Third World people directly, but as a second ideology prop which has penetrated all classes of American society and which likewise divides those who might be united against imperialism.

As a mass anti-imperialist organization, it is essential that the work of VVAW/WSO be linked on a national level to these struggles and that chapters be conscious of the need to lend material political support to them as an important part of our on-going work. Through this work, our membership and base will develop a greater ability to apply these struggles to their own lives.

One of the main weaknesses of the anti-war movement was the limited participation of working class people. This weakness was one reason it did not develop an anti-imperialist consciousness on a broader scale and limited its effectiveness in providing material support for the struggle of the Vietnamese people. It would be incorrect for VVAW/WSO to seek to become a working class organization. As a mass organization it can and should relate to many segments of U.S. society. However, because of the exploitation of the working class under imperialism and the role it must play in the destruction of imperialism, VVAW/WAO must participate in working class struggles, develop a more class conscious outlook and bring our anti-imperialist politics to the working class.

The work of any anti-imperialist organization would be incomplete if it did not in part provide support for the struggles for national liberation being waged within the Third World. It was the victory of the Vietnamese over the U.S. imperialists which turned the tide against its expansionist exploitation and dealt a sharp blow to



the entire system of imperialism. Although the leading forces within this victory were the Vietnamese themselves, forces throughout the world including the anti-war movement in the U.S. and its military helped in this effort. The Third World struggles for liberation and self-determination are a leading factor in the destruction of imperialism. Their role and that of anti-imperialist organizations within the imperialist states are directly linked as imperialism becomes encircled from without and destroyed from within.

#### GI and Prison Organizing

The section of this paper on veterans oppression deals with the way in which we must take up the tasks before VVAW/WSO in organizing veterans into the anti-imperialist movement. In addition to those and the tasks addressed in the previous section, The Struggle Against Imperialism, VVAW/WSO as a mass anti-imperialist organization must develop its ongoing work in the areas of GI and prison organizing. There are many objective differences between the conditions that GI's and prisoners face. However, there also exist many similarities:

1. Both the military and prisons serve as receptacles for alienated working class youth.
2. Both the military and prisons involve disproportionate numbers of Third World people.
3. Both the military and prison system serve as direct instruments in the maintenance of the imperialist state.
4. The struggles within both include the struggle against the deprivation of constitutional rights.
5. Both GI's and prisoners experience isolation from the general population.

VVAW/WSO has had on-going practice in the GI movement over a long period of time. In dealing with the conditions of GI's in the military, we have developed an understanding which enabled us to take up the struggles of prisoners as well. Both areas of work are addressed in the position put forward by the NO.

The Buffalo Chapter has had no experience in GI organizing, therefore it would be presumptuous of us to attempt to put forward an extensive analysis of GI work on a proposal concerning it. However, we have disagreements with the NO position in terms of what our role as an organization should be within the GI movement. The NO says that "Besides providing an anti-imperialist analysis," our work in the GI movement "must be viewed from the point of view of conscious leadership-leadership that serves a vanguard role of always being out in front showing the best possible way to carry the struggle forward-leadership that is continually trying to initiate action to organize GI's to fight back". In addition, they say that "we should always be prepared to go to these struggles and do all possible to broaden and deepen them, constantly striving to inject as much political content into them as possible." Is the NO presuming that we have the experience in the GI movement, over all other forces in that movement, to take the role of the cadre organization for GI's? Is the NO saying that the struggles of GI's would not have political content if we did not "strive to inject it?" We see that to continue and develop our work in the GI movement is very important. We agree with the NO when they say that civilians must take an active role in that movement because

of the position that GI's are in. We recognize that because of our large veteran membership, VVAW/WSO has the ability to relate to the GI movement that many other mass anti-imperialist organizations lack. However, VVAW/WSO does not have the experience in the GI movement to take the vanguard role in that movement. This is pure arrogance! VVAW/WSO is a mass, not a cadre, organization. The statement of the NO that we must "inject" political content into GI struggles shows nothing but contempt for the consciousness of GI's in carrying out those struggles.

The Buffalo Chapter is just beginning to develop analysis and practice around prison struggles. Again, it would be presumptuous to put forward an extensive analysis in an area where our practice is limited.

We have been involved in prison struggles through our practice in and around the struggles of the Attica Brothers and Martin Sostre. This practice is now expanding into the prison struggles in general. As we gained a greater understanding of the meaning and importance of these struggles, we realized the necessity of developing an analysis of prisons and prison struggles and the so-called criminal justice system in general. We realize that prisons are used as a direct instrument of repression in the imperialist state. We realize they are used to physically attack those who rise up against imperialism and that along with the bourgeois ideology of "law and order" serve as essential bulwarks for the tottering imperialist system. The Third World communities, because of their super-exploitation and the subsequently higher level of resistance to imperialism, feel most sharply the brunt of this attack. The importance of prisons and prison struggles can be seen from the fact that many leading voices within the anti-imperialist movement, especially among Third World people, trace vital stages of their development to time spent facing the most brutal forms of oppression and exploitation within prisons. The importance of prison struggles is also clear because they directly attack a special repressive mechanism of the imperialist state, the bourgeois ideology of law and order and racism. We agree with the national office that VVAW/WSO cannot organize the prison struggle. As within the military, it is internal forces that must play the leading role. And also, as within the military, the diligent support of outside forces is vital. The NO reduces much of the analysis of our prison work to the question of whether or not it includes real members or chapters of VVAW/WSO. We should be involved in struggles where we provide material political support on the basis of whether or not they deal sharp blows to imperialism and on the potential they have in educating our membership and base and the broader segments of society it is possible for us to reach. Choosing our struggles on the basis of whether they build real membership is mechanical and opportunistic. VVAW/WSO will build itself and the anti-imperialist movement by taking up important struggles against imperialism - not the other way around.

We agree with the NO that we have built up a good reputation within the prison movement on the basis of our practice. However, it is subjective and self-serving analysis to put forward that practice as the D.C. Demonstration and VA take-overs since much of our prison work developed before those actions took place. We find that it is honest, principled and consistent practice around these struggles which is the most important element in building that

relationship of trust.

Given the importance of prison struggles, the broad level of practice around prisons and the courts within VVAW/WSO, the difficulty of building ties with the prison movement and the lack of concrete support for it, it is vitally important for VVAW/WSO to not only keep up, but expand where possible, the prison work we are doing. The NO states that our prison work will continue as long as "time, energy and money" hold out. We think that our prison work, based on an understanding of its political importance should continue until the imperialist system, which built and is maintained by those prisons, is smashed or until there is no longer significant material political aid we can lend to it.

### Democracy and VVAW-WSO

The August NSCM pointed out an area that was severely lacking in VVAW-WSO. That area is in the form of democratic representation. We found at the Buffalo NSCM that 3 chapters comprised over 1/3 of the delegation present at this meeting. All three of these chapters also represented regions of which region and chapter were one and the same, i.e. - (Northern Illinois-Iowa), of which the whole chapter's membership attended the NSCM.

Regions that had only 6 active members in the entire region were granted a 5 vote status that gave them the same amount of voting leverage on political struggles as such regions as California-Nevada, New York-Northern New Jersey. MOINKVVAWPA has many chapters and in fact more active members in one committee within chapters than the entire membership of some of the 5 vote regions.

This is of essence sham democracy. In fact, in no way, shape, or form can this method of voting adequately reflect the wishes of the membership of VVAW-WSO.

## Summary

This paper is a summation of the investigation the Buffalo chapter has conducted around the struggle in VVAW-WSO. In it we take political positions on many of the questions being raised within that struggle, but this paper is not meant to be the "line" of our chapter or a proposal for the resolution of that struggle.

We see that proposals for the future focus and programmatic work of VVAW-WSO should come out of political struggle and not be put forward at the beginning of those struggles in such a way as to set the terms and prematurely define the boundaries of it.

We see that the components of these proposals should be aimed at striking blows at the imperialist system. We do not seek to become the entire anti-imperialist movement, but understand that as a mass organization within we have a responsibility to aid in its growth along a broad front. We cannot concentrate our efforts on simply developing a narrow part of it or try to take a vanguard role within it. This is not the function of a mass organization. The primary tasks of a mass organization is: to actively oppose imperialism through the education of its membership and base and providing material political support for struggles waged against imperialism.

In order to do this we we have to engage in programmatic work that relates to and flows from our development as an organization and our base and membership. For VVAW-WSO, as a specific mass organization, this would mean work around amnesty, the legitimate readjustment demands of veterans and material political aid and solidarity for third world struggles for liberation, particularly in Indochina.

We have an obligation to participate in concrete struggles being waged against racism and sexism which serve as ideological props for imperialism and exploitive property relations. This struggle, and our participation in it, cannot be limited to any single manifestation of them.

In addition, our participation in struggles where we cannot be the leading factor is necessary to insure the continuation of the social practice needed for our own development.

This paper has included criticisms of some of the positions being put forward and some areas of practice. We have striven to be principled and precise in these criticisms. Our goal is that the organization seriously consider them and evaluate these positions and this practice in light of them.

The purpose of this paper is to present what we have learned and help spark the struggle on a broader range, based upon more concrete investigations than have taken place so far. We hope that the NSCM, chapters and individuals of VVAW-WSO will take the time to seriously study what we have put forward, conduct their own investigations and criticize this paper. We welcome such criticism! We will try and constructively respond to criticisms put forward, striving to clarify our positions where they are unclear, develop them where they are incomplete and correct them where they are in error.

## A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL POSITION

What follows is a summary of what we see as the key points of the National Office position, taken from the Political Statement of the National Collective on the Nature and Future of VVAW-WSO, the Clarification Paper of the National Collective Position Paper on the Future of VVAW-WSO, the Statement and Proposal on Building the Anti-Imperialist GI Movement, the prison newsletter Inside/Out #5, and the National Office Report to the 12th and the 13th NSCM. We tried to list the major aspects of their position on each of 9 questions or areas.

- 1) the concept of the United Front Against Imperialism
- 2) Mass vs. Cadre Organizations
- 3) What is a Focus?
- 4) What is a National Program?
- 5) What is the spontaneous veterans movement?
- 6) the GI movement
- 7) the continuation of "outside" work
- 8) Racism and Sexism
- 9) the WSO concept--non-vet participation

### United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI)

- 1) there is a developing UFAI, outside any formal plan or declaration. It is unclear at this point what type of party will be leading this UFAI. The UFAI must be organized "at the enterprizes", or around the specific oppression that affects various segments of society under Imperialism. (NO Pos. Pap. & Clarification)
- 2) basis of understanding of UFAI - Dimitrov quote: "UFAI is a broad mobilization and unification of the masses from below, at the enterprizes, around the united organ for struggle created by the masses themselves." These "united organs" for struggle must spring up "at the enterprizes." (NO Pos. Pap. - underline ours to indicate difference between quotes)
- 3) example of UFAI: July 1-4 Demo in D.C. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 4) political unity around the concept of UFAI is not necessary to unite with focus on vets and GI's. (Clarification)

### Mass Vs. Cadre Organizations

- 1) there is a tendency in VVAW-WSO to limit its work and develop into a cadre type organization. VVAW-WSO must remain a mass organization capable of uniting as many people as possible against imperialism. Main value of a mass org. - capacity to involve a broad spectrum of society. (NO Report to 12th NSCM - April 1974)
- 2) "one incorrect analysis of VVAW-WSO can be called 'vanguardism'. That is, that we should be a cadre org. to lead the anti-imp. movement (NO Pos. Pap. - Aug. 1974)
- 3) VVAW-WSO must take responsibility for the conscious leadership of the spontaneous vet & GI movements. Leadership that serves a vanguard role - always being out in front showing the best way to move forward. (statement & prop. on GI movement - Oct. 1974)

### What is a Focus?

- 1) Focus--center of activity around which we build the org. Focus will determine base (clarification Paper)
- 2) the need for a cohesive National focus has been recognized as we have evaluated our past practice. NO Pos. Pap. pp 10 - 13)
- 3) Responsible Action - example of an unfocused org.

- 44) those chapters that had a specific focus - primarily amnesty with emphasis on vet & GI issues - grew and developed. Others did not.
- 5) when we worked with a specific focus, as part of a UFAI, we were able to pull off a militant national action - July 1-4 demo (NO Pos. Pap.)

What is a National Program?

- 1) (unclear if there is a difference between focus and program) "focus" and "program" often used interchangeably. (NO Pos. Pap. & Clarification)
- 2) need for a cohesive national program realized by the org. after anarchists dismembered the national structure in favor of regional autonomy. (Denver NSCM)
- 3) national projects can exist outside of national program
- 4) examples of things referred to in different papers as "national programs": four demands (current)  
calendar of dates for national actions (curr)  
the war in Indochina (past)  
Republican & Democratic National Conventions (past)

What is the spontaneous vets movement?

- 1) there is a rising spontaneous upsurge of vets who are a) an identifiable constituency and b) have a special oppression which can be linked to imperialism (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 2) the word constituency is abandoned and criticized, however the content of the concept stays the same (clarification)
- 3) we are not in the business of "ranking oppression" - what is primary is that vets and GI's are oppressed, not how oppressed they are relative to other constituencies. (clarification)
- 4) vets must be organized a) because of the role they play under imperialism and b) because of their special oppression.
- 5) "someone" is going to take up the leadership role in their spontaneous movement and it better be us so they're not left to careerists and opportunists. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 6) we are not trying to organize every vet into the org. - just to lead them in their spontaneous movement. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 7) the only way to organize vets into the anti-imperialist movement is to organize an anti-imp. vets movement. Must be linked to the anti-imp. GI movement. (clarification)
- 8) a monumental victory of VVAW-WSO was that AVM was exposed for what it is. They represent one of the (2) incorrect tendencies in VVAW-WSO. (NO Pos. Pap.)

The GI Movement

- 1) we must organize GI's because of the role of the military under imp. while we also recognize their special oppression within the military.
- 2) the GI movement is at a low level of activity due to lack of political and structural unity. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 3) VVAW-WSO must take the lead in trying to build this structural unity which is the highest expression of political unity. (statement and proposal on GI's)
- 4) we cannot see the GI movement in isolation from other struggles. There must be an anti-imperialist context for our organizing of G.I.'s. Our work must be viewed from the

standpoint of conscious leadership. Cardinal principle - must be a fighting G.I. movement. (statement & proposal on G.I. Movement)

- 5) The only way to organize G.I.'s into the anti-imperialist movement is to organize an anti-imperialist G.I. movement (clarification)
- 6) must be linked to anti-imperialist vets movement (clarification paper)

The continuation of "outside work", aka "support work" aka "general demands"

- 1) Support work is work outside of the focus of the org. which does not take the responsibility of organizing people directly into the antiimperialist movement.
2. general demands can be raised that are in the interests of the' anti-imperialist movement, however immediate demands must relate to our focus around vets & GIs.
3. outside work is done by chapters because local conditions must dictate local practice; but local practice cannot dictate the national focus and the national focus must be applied to local conditions. (clarifications)
4. we should not & can not take responsibility for organizing people other than veterans & GIs directly into the anti-imperialist movement. (specifically prisoners.
5. we can continue our "outside work" with prisoners and around racism and sexism because there are vets in prisons and there are women and blacks in the military who are oppressed. (clarif)
6. no cut back seen in prison work at this time as long as our time energy and resources hold out. (Inside / Out #5.)
7. Chapters in prisons cannot have the political and programmatic unity that the rest of the organ. has.

Racism and Sexism

1. We can organize against racism and sexism with this focus because racism and sexism exist in the military and women and third world people are doubly oppressed as vets and GIs.
2. This focus will force us to deal with racism just as the struggle around women in the org. forced us to deal with sexism. (clarific)
3. the organization's support of the struggle of black people in Cairo, Ill. was an indication of the organization's consciousness of the links between racism at home and the racist nature of the war in Indochina. (NO position paper) this was also a beginning sign of conscious anti-imperialist in the organization.

The WSO concept non-Veteran participation

1. WSO originally envisioned VVAW-WSO as THE mass anti-imperialist organization in the US (NO pos. paper)
2. NO supports WSO as a means to legitimize the participation of women and non-vets. (clarification)
3. WSO took root as we became anti-imperialist and were searching for an anti-imperialist structure and program.
4. reasons why the org. moved toward WSO concept:
  - a. ability to draw in vets and non-vets alike
  - b. few natl. organizations still functioning after the anti-war movement faded.
  - c. we were held in esteem by international organizations and political parties.
  - d. there were non-vets, particularly women in leadership positions.
  - e. we were looking forward to the end of the war and searching for a program to take up at that time



5. The Gainesville action was the first to take place after  
intro. of the WSO concept and represented and unfocused organization.

6. anti-imperialists who see the importance of organizing vets and  
GIs and want to build the anti-imperialist movement will find  
VVAW/WSO the perfect organization to work in. We can also organize  
wives, lovers and husbands of vets and GIs into this movement.  
(clarification).....

8. Women and non-vets may choose to leave VVAW/WSO to do work in  
others areas.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR/WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION

Storefront: 263 Connecticut Street  
Buffalo, New York 14213  
(716) 886-8645

Mailing Address: Box 902  
Buffalo, New York 14205

YEAR'S EVALUATION

BUFFALO CHAPTER

1. Political Education

A. Study Groups

1. 3 Marxist-Leninist study groups, with about 35 people participating
2. developed political analysis, moved work of organization forward.
3. first study group formed did not develop an elite, but made people aware of the need for study and political education, which resulted in the second and then the third group being formed.
4. each successive study group learned and built on lessons of ones before it.

B. Films

1. good educational tool, effective means of outreach
2. should have been better planned and coordinated to develop and complement our political work.
3. should have been co-sponsored with other groups, gotten more exposure.

C. Literature

1. we've built up a supply of anti-imperialist pamphlets, most written by people in revolutionary struggles in the U.S. and throughout the world.
2. only group in city which makes a large variety of literature available at reasonable prices.
3. lending library - books available to members and people in community; this library is pretty much utilized.

D. Forums

1. are developing techniques for successful political forums.
2. are holding political forums on a monthly basis.

E. Development of Self and Mutual Criticism

1. positive - essential to the further development of political education and to carry these lessons into our political struggles.
2. awareness of the necessity that we need more practice.
3. criticism is acquiring more political content.

We feel all of these means of Political Education fulfill the criteria set forth at the Yellow Springs NSCM. Additionally, they have concretely and positively affected our Mass Work. We started our analysis with Political Education because we feel that this has had the greatest effect on all other work that we've done.

## II. Mass Work

### A. Newspaper Sales

1. established a continuous and well-received presence at the unemployment office, in spite of NCLC's attempts to poison the atmosphere for political organizing.
  - a. it is important to maintain a presence. When there is a long period of time between W.S., it is harder to sell them.
2. we regularly insert leaflets into the W.S. (e.g. Attica News, Single Type Discharge, demo announcements).

### B. Leafletting

1. class analysis in leaflets is improving.
2. leaflet regularly and have established presence in shopping areas.
3. have leafletted door-to-door twice in the Connecticut Street (Storefront area) community.
  - a. we should do more leafletting and follow-up.

### C. Demonstrations and Rallies

1. VVAW-WSO has taken leadership in major demonstrations in Bflo
2. we criticize ourselves for participating in a demonstration without sufficient planning, but have learned from that.
3. picketing has been relatively successful, in spite of short lead time (e.g. Attica trials).
4. We've participated in the following demonstrations:
  - a. Jan. 27 - Implement the agreements, End Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol.
  - b. Feb. 26 - Attica, calendar calls
  - c. Mar. 29 - Viet Vets Day, Picket at Fed'l. Bldg.
  - d. Apr. 27 - Attica
  - e. May 10 - Ford's visit
  - f. May 11 - Chile demo
  - g. May 16 - Rocky demo
  - h. June 29 - VA hosp., building for July 1-4
  - i. May 18 - Armed Forces Day - West Point
  - j. July 1-4, Nat'l. Actions.
  - k. Sept. 11 - Chile Demo.
  - l. Sept. 14, Attica Demo
  - m. Oct. 27 - Puerto Rican Solidarity Day

Analysis and Evaluation - October, 1974  
Part 4

B. Organizational Structure has improved our work.

1. Coordinating Committee (5 elected, rotating members)
  - a. more clarification of responsibility
  - b. improvement of functioning of Coord. Commit.
    1. communications (within org. and with other org.)
      - a. monthly newsletter to membership with improved content
      - b. with regional and national offices
      - c. with other organizations
      - d. chapter phone list
    2. collectivity
    3. planning and follow-through
  - c. initiates activities
  - d. plans and coordinates work for demonstrations, often in conjunction with specific internal committees, special committees, and outside organizations.
2. Planning Committee (Coord. Commit. and representatives from other committees).
  - a. meets weekly to formulate policy and to plan and coordinate activities.
  - b. still need to develop regular commitment by membership to attend and participate in Planning Comm. meetings.
3. Amnesty- Discharge Upgrading Project
  - a. Qualitatively improved.
    1. mass work
    2. collectivity of action
    3. on-going work
    4. individual responsibility
    5. growth (14 members)
    6. speaking to audiences at schools, community meetings, forums.
4. Prisoners and Political Defense
  - a. has done strong work around Attica, Martin Sostre, Gary Lawton (e.g., dinners, pickets, movie showings, trial support, etc.)
  - b. lack of collectivity and unclear political focus resulted in decrease in mass work in summer
  - c. in process of re-organizing and defining political focus.
5. Regional Support
  - a. no longer functioning, although it had done some essential work, in preventing reg. coord. from becoming isolated. should be re-established.
  - b. hosted NSCM, August, 1974, along with support from chapter.

D. Postering

1. established practice of postering once a week
  - a. linked into our on-going work, both locally and nationally.
  - b. utilize old Winter Soldiers, leaflets, posters, demo announcements, etc.

E. Children's Films

1. means of outreach into the immediate community.
2. films should have more progressive and educational content.
3. membership has not worked collectively here.

F. Bourgeois Press & Media

1. not enough initiative in scheduling appearances on TV, radio, or communications with newspapers.

G. Films and Forums - discussed under Political Education.

The increasing effectiveness of our Mass Work has resulted in quantitative and qualitative changes in our chapter's Growth and Development.

III. Growth and Development

A. Membership has grown

1. collectivity has improved
2. decline in specialization (more people writing leaflets, doing lay-out, speaking, distribution of work, leadership, representation at meetings - combat elitism and niche making).
3. more conscious world view - not so isolated
4. individual responsibility and discipline have increased
  - a. people are more serious about their work and work has improved
5. beginning contacts with Third World struggles in this community have been made, but participation by Third World people has been lacking.
6. women taking leadership role, but number of women participating remains small.
7. Regional and National Meetings
  - a. many members have represented this chapter, resulting in increased understanding of organization at all levels.
8. Social Events - softball games and team, picnics, camp-outs.

6. Participation by members in struggles outside chapter activities (Work place, Day Care)
  - a. enhanced by membership in chapter
  - b. chapter has not consistently supported this work.
7. PVS-PMS Committee
  - a. no longer functioning due to lack of clear political goals
8. Child Care
  - a. not presently functioning
  - b. attempts to organize child care failed
    1. leaders did not motivate people or present a clear program
    2. membership lacked understanding of need for child care.

#### Community Storefront

1. Established on-going presence in community
  - a. self-reliant, no longer dependent on colleges or university
  - b. not flash-in-the-pan community organization or fly-by-night campus group.
2. All work based out of Storefront.
  - a. equipment located here.

#### Acquisitions

1. Gestetner
2. Magazine rack
3. more furniture
4. use of projector
5. Offset press
6. second storefront
7. radio
8. paper stock
9. larger stock of pamphlets, office materials, etc.

#### Relationships with Other Organizations

1. We've established good working relationships with the following groups:

1. Attica Brothers Legal Defense (ABLD)
2. Anti-monopoly Committee
3. Buffalo Worker
4. Committee for Chilean Democracy
5. National Lawyers' Guild
6. Puerto Rican & Chicano Committee
7. Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB)
8. Revolutionary Union (RU)
9. Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF)

#### Coalition work

1. Farah
2. United Farmworkers
3. Amnesty and Reconciliation Coalition
4. Comm. for Chilean Democracy
5. ABLD

C. Due to lack of understanding of work done by organizations, subjective criticisms have been made by members. To correct this, we've started meetings with one group every other Saturday

1. establish liaisons with these groups
2. understand practice of organizations
3. joint sponsor activities, purchase paper, etc. in bulk.

D. No relationship with CP-YWLL

E. Antagonistic relations with:

1. Spartacist League,
2. National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC)
3. Buffalo Police Department
4. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

#### Fund-Raising

A. Pledge system

1. due to sporadic fund-raising, back bills, and the need for a permanent funding base, we asked members to pledge \$5 or more per month.
2. 20 people participate
3. range from \$5-\$30/mo.
4. enabled us to regularly support Regional and National offices, pay rent on two storefronts, and continue programs.
5. we are self-reliant.

B. Committees are expected to hold fund-raising events and use these to promote activities as well as earn money for the chapter. These fund-raising events are gaining political content and are increasingly successful. Some are:

1. Dinners
2. Bake sales
3. Benefits
4. Paper drives
5. Garage sales
6. Book and record sale
7. Newspaper and lit sales
8. Dues at meetings
9. Film showings
10. Contributions from mailings

C. Raise money in support of:

1. Melvin X. Smith
2. Bob Hood
3. MOSCAM
4. Wounded Knee
5. Lawton-Gardner
6. Attica
7. Martin Sostre
8. Buffalo Worker
9. National Office
10. Regional Office.

Analysis and Evaluation, October 1974

## Regional

### I. Regional Office and Coordinator

- A. Written communications have been regular, particularly with respect to newsletters.
- B. Verbal communications are not as good as should be
  - i. needs of regional coordinator are frequently not known by our chapter.
- C. Due to lack of support from a regional support committee responsible for this, the regional coordinator frequently is isolated and over-loaded with bureaucratic work.
- D. It seems the regional coordinator should travel to other and especially smaller chapters more frequently. Perhaps chapters close to each other could arrange a 2-4 day tour.
- E. Over-all, we feel the regional coordinator should be credited with keeping a vast area unified and in contact, a job we feel requires an extreme amount of time and skills, particularly in view of the diversity of this region.

### II. Chapters

- A. Our communications with near-by chapters has been weak.
- B. Chapters have not consistently recognized the needs of the Regional Office. We have voted on a system of financial support, but have generally failed to implement it. This seriously hinders the amount of communications, phone calls, mailings, travel which the reg. coord. can do, due to lack of finances.
- C. Not all chapters in the region have been sending mailings and notices to us, but this is improving.
- D. From the contacts we have had (mailings, Regional Meetings, Rallies and Demonstrations, etc.) it seems collective work is increasing and chapters are becoming stronger.





**VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR/  
WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION**

1023 ALLEN AVENUE  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63104

12 November 1974

Dear friends:

This is a three-part open letter to the National Office Collective of VVAW/WSO. The first section is our response to the omission of our chapter from the forthcoming GI organizing workshop to develop ideas for the VVAW/WSO organizational program to be discussed at the December steering committee meeting.

The second and third sections come with our urging and approval, but are necessarily the work of our members who attended the National GI Organizing Conference in October, Dave Buntin, Danny Cummins, Jane Cummins and Art Graves.

We are sending this to all participants at the past conference, and to all regional offices. To save some expense for us, we would appreciate the regional offices circulating this among the local chapters who did not attend the conference.

We encourage your criticisms and responses. Thanks.

Take care, in the struggle,

St. Louis-VVAW/WSO

MEMORANDUM FOR SUBJECT ORGANIZATION

At the GI organizing workshop during the Buffalo National Steering Committee meeting, which Rich Bangert chaired, Bill Cish told folks that Jane and Denny Cummins from the GI Assistance Project in St. Louis had joined VVAW/WSO. At that same N.S.C. meeting, Lee Holland told both Rich and Marla Watson that Jane and Denny should be invited to attend the National GI Organizing Conference as representatives from the St. Louis chapter.

When the National Office of VVAW/WSO hosted the National GI Organizing Conference, an invitation was sent to GIAP. Since four of the folks central to GIAP had also become active in VVAW/WSO, we considered the invitation to GIAP to be an invitation to the chapter as well.

Five people attended the conference from St. Louis, four of whom were in both GIAP and VVAW/WSO. On the first night of the conference, Jane Cummins talked to Rich Bangert and got clear that it was agreeable to the National Office that we participate as both VVAW/WSO and GIAP. She also informed Rich that some of our contingent would caucus with the VVAW/WSO chapters and others with the longer-standing GI projects. In fact, throughout the conference Denny Cummins did caucus with VVAW/WSO.

Rich Bangert, who participated in the beginnings of the GIAP three and a half years ago, was asked to explain the omission of the St. Louis chapter from the list of those invited to the Thanksgiving weekend workshop. He replied that the N.O. didn't know whether or not the chapter had sanctioned the GIAP, and also that the N.O. might have been thinking that people in both GIAP and VVAW/WSO were just people with cross-membership.

If the N.O. was so confused on the status of GI work within the St. Louis chapter, which we find hard to believe, then we criticize the N.O. for failing to clarify this with the chapter immediately.

We believe that it's the responsibility of the N.O. to coordinate our nationwide membership's preparation for national Steering Committee meetings. As part of that responsibility, they have called a GI organizing workshop to begin developing VVAW/WSO's organizational program for GI work in preparation for the December N.S.C.M.

The National Office collective, as yet, has relatively little experience with GI work. We think it short-sighted that they have not encouraged any and all members in VVAW/WSO who have done, or are doing, GI work to come to this workshop: especially since such people would provide input from experience, of both their theory and their practice, in the GI Movement.

Remember, as an organization, VVAW/WSO is joining the GI Movement—not starting it—and has much past practice from among its own members to draw on in shaping its role in the movement. We criticize the N.O. for failing to recognize and encourage that input.

We wonder also if political considerations played a part in the N.O. decision on who they would invite to the weekend workshop. This question occurred to us in view of (1) the exclusion of the American Servicemen's Union from the National GI Organizing Conference and (2) the belated invitation to Military Action Committee/Wildcat for that conference. (M.A.C. published Wildcat, a national newspaper for GI's and working people; they are based in Chicago, and among other things, have worked with reservists and national guardsmen.)

1) Because of A.S.U.'s past practice, which has often been divisive and destructive, the N.O. excluded them. The N.O. however, was satisfied in that regard.

as a whole for the way in which this was done and suggestions were made for more principled ways to settle such questions in the future, including reviewing the present practice of groups.

2) MAC/Wildcat did attend the conference. They received an invitation, but apparently only after Bob Anyon of VVAW/WSO-Denver, who learned at the National Lawyers Guild Convention that MAC had not received an invitation, called the N.O. to ask that the mistake be corrected.

It looks to us like the political differences were the real basis for this mistake--differences between the N.O. and the Revolutionary Union on the one hand and MAC and the Sojourner Truth Organization on the other. (STO is an independent point-of-production organization based in Chicago.) Some members of MAC were once members of STO, and some members of VVAW/WSO are members of R.U. The differences between R.U. and STO are known on all sides and are a matter of political principles, as well as of political practice.

There were a good number of us attending the conference who also differ with R.U., and the St. Louis chapter representatives were very consistently opposed to much which the R.U. and N.O. coincidentally proposed at that conference. (St. Louis and the N.O. opposed each other on 7 votes and voted with each other on 3 votes; St. Louis voted with the majority of the conference on 8 votes and with the minority on 1 vote.)

This being so, and given our understanding of the N.O. practice around the National GI Organizing Conference, we suspect that the N.O. found it convenient to let their doubts about GI work in our chapter remain rather than checking with the chapter.

Instead of bypassing the chapter, with its ties to a long-standing GI project, we think that an organization making GI work a priority would welcome and encourage it. Rather than suppressing principled disagreements and practice that conflict with its own, we expect the N.O. to confront those differences.

Having a more representative and broadly based workshop in advance of the N.S.C. meeting would give us that much better a chance to clarify the issues and formulate proposals for the N.S.C. The St. Louis chapter wishes to send folks to the workshop and encourages all other chapters whose members have done GI work to do the same.

If housing in Chicago is a problem, St. Louis chapter members have other friends and comrades in Chicago who would also provide housing to workshop participants.

#### A SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL GI ORGANIZING CONFERENCE FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

The last GI Movement Conference was in November of '71, with regional conferences happening after that. A lot has happened during this time: the signing of the Paris Peace Accords; a decline in interest in the GI Movement on the Left; drying up of liberal money; end of the draft and beginning of VOLAR; deepening crisis for imperialism with accompanying U.S. military strategic response; worsening conditions in the U.S. with the military preparing for a greater role in domestic repression.

Many people felt the need for a conference of all groups doing military organizing. VVAW/WSO, after making a decision on a national level to get more involved in GI work, hosted the conference.

The purpose of the conference was to share and critically evaluate our organizing experiences, develop unified strategy for our military organizing, and develop more effective

eration and communication among groups using organizing.

By a slim majority, the conference voted to call for demonstrations on Armed Forces Day wherever feasible and desirable. Despite denials by the National Office, many groups at the conference felt that the slogan, BUILD THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST GI MOVEMENT: UNITE TO FIGHT ALL OPPRESSION, represented the strategy of a "united front against imperialism". (One question which was much debated was whether or not GI's are workers, and where they would fit in a "united front".) The slogan was rejected by a vote of 60 to 35. There was a general discussion around the eight demands proposed by the N.O., and criticisms were generally formulated this way: the demands are based on a united front strategy which folks did not agree with; the demands are tangential, do not get to the heart of our work; the demands do not confront the issue of class head-on; and the concepts behind the demands do not reflect our practice. No vote was taken on the demands. The N.O. had suggested that the demands not be voted on.

Although the conference did not reach a point of unity around any set of demands or slogans, we did reach agreement on several questions. Resolutions were passed unanimously for: 1) hold another GI organizing conference in a year; 2) strengthen the ties between the GI movement and the labor movement; 3) support Puerto Rican independence; 4) send a representative to the Dutch GI Conference; 5) and send a message of solidarity to the Anti-NATO conference.

Resolutions on which substantial unity were reached were: 1) the proposal on the need to work with women in the military and in military families; 2) proposal for a campaign against martial law and riot control activities of the military; 3) the proposal that we encourage independent Third World organizations; and 4) the proposal that we support independent women's groups.

Two final resolutions, besides the N.O.'s Armed Forces Day proposal, were adopted with no real unity: 1) support for gay people in the military; and 2) that the A.S.U. be invited to the next GI conference and that meanwhile groups investigate the practice of the A.S.U. and discuss it in the GIPA Bulletin.

Many people felt that, "black and other Third World organizations were getting more scrutiny at this conference--that their 'politics' were being questioned more than that of white groups."

During the criticism-self criticism it was pointed out: "The most disturbing thing about the conference was the self-conscious and juvenile way some people responded to the WAM (Workers Action Movement) people at the hotel. It bordered on racism in many cases. We should be clear enough to see that people who happen to belong to another political organization are still in the same fight. And most of the WAM folks were third world workers."

Also, the quality and quantity of struggle was positively noted several times. Brian Adams, of the N.O., thanked people for the way in which they struggled over political questions and thought that the discussions had helped VVAW/NSO to move forward.

#### OUR CRITIQUE OF THE N.O. ROLE AROUND THE GI ORGANIZING CONFERENCE

In hopes of influencing the theory and practice of the National Office Collective, we from St. Louis who attended the National GI Organizing Conference want to make the

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the N.O. proposed, projected racism and sexism as  
... than as key elements of political principle and  
... separate, distinct, and demanding of the full atten-  
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... conference allot workshop time for discussion of their  
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... put the N.O. in the position--rather arrogant, in our  
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... since the N.O.'s proposed agenda took considerable dis-  
... that discussion by standing firm behind its 13  
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... the whole history of VVAW/WSO meetings in order to

#### THE CONFERENCE

... slogan dose up on a large canvas banner, centrally placed  
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... knew that underlying such a slogan was a strategy need-  
... Movement, we wonder what the banner represented:  
... would be adopted? a useful banner to have whatever  
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... folks care to the conference to share experiences and  
... illustrated that the N.O. did not tie its theory to practice  
... This failure made it difficult for us to respond to the

... to the N.O. notion of "elevating weaknesses to the level  
... independent Third World organizations and to independent  
... most of us were in agreement that, to promote real and  
... peoples and women have to have an independent power base,  
... of white and male supremacy in our society.

... in a letter to the Center for Servicemen's Rights, printed  
... the GIWA News and Discussion Bulletin, and again at the  
... tive took the position of "not having a position" on gay  
... with GI's believe it is a false assumption to think  
... rights will narrow our base, particularly in light of  
... tactic used by the brass, and in light of the substantial  
... military. Beyond that, we see this as a question of prin-  
... -building.

... folks involved in GI work discouraged us and at times  
... it was a terrible slip for one of the N.O. collective mem-  
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... rather, the N.O. should have commended the participants  
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1. The N.O. in reporting on this conference through the Newsletter, glossed over the substance of struggle and the kind of agreement reached about their proposal.

Many of us at the conference viewed the proposals as:

a) a "united front against imperialism strategy",

b) a strategy and program removed from our actual work,

and c) a strategy and program that does not confront the issue of class head-on.

Because of this interpretation of the N.O. proposal, the slogan was defeated, the demands tabled, and the Armed Forces Day action only narrowly and conditionally approved. These votes came at the end of the conference after long hours of discussion and debate, done in a principled and serious way.

2. For us, the N.O. was much too self-congratulatory in their statement that the conference was "an important first step in developing a program for GI organizing that is based on solid, well thought-out political theory." We dislike the implication that, but for this conference, such theory would not have been developing.

3. The charges that folks, "(except VVAW/MSO chapters present)" were "unwilling to struggle to a point of unity around any demands" and that folks "opposed it [the N.O. proposal] simply because we were putting it forward" outraged us. We consider such remarks to be a really cheap shot. Furthermore, these charges directly contradict the comments members of the N.O. collective made at the criticism/self criticism session at the end of the conference. There they commended the level of struggle, and a chapter member made note of the willingness of conference participants to change their minds. Perhaps the feelings of the N.O. ripened and surfaced as the days passed; but we criticize their sour, false, and unconstructive summation of the conference.

We will share our criticisms with all who attended the conference, especially so those whose motives and commitment were slandered by the N.O. know that the N.O. has been criticized.



# VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR/ WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION, INC.



NATIONAL OFFICE  
827 West Newport  
Chicago, Illinois 60657  
Tel (312) 935-2129

December 20, 1974

To: VVAW/WSO  
1023 Allen Ave.  
St. Louis, Missouri 63104

From: VVAW/WSO National Office

Re: Reply to St. Louis Letter of Nov. 12th:

As we stated at the Thanksgiving GI workshop, we feel it is our duty to respond in detail to the public letter the St. Louis chapter sent out concerning our alleged "wrongdoings" during the Oct. 11-14 National GI Conference in Chicago. We will respond to each of the various points raised in the letter and also try to analyze where we think they are coming from. We will not repeat our response to the "criticisms" about not being invited to the GI work weekend as that is covered in a previous letter (see attached), and by the fact that members of the St. Louis chapter did attend the Thanksgiving workshop.

1. At the bottom of page one of the letter, the question of the exclusion of the American Servicemen's Union and the "belated" invitation to MAC/Wildcat is raised. This is done in a blatant attempt to discredit the National Office with the accusation that we excluded those two groups from the Chicago GI Conference, and the St. Louis chapter from the Thanksgiving work weekend, on the basis of personal sectarian politics. Then, in what is objectively plain old-fashioned red-baiting, the authors of the letter try to link this with the NO's political positions and their similarity to the Revolutionary Union's. There is no correlation between the political differences of the RU and Sojourner Truth Organization (STO) and the situation concerning ASU and MAC/Wildcat that you raised in your letter. RU had nothing to do with setting up this conference nor our position on ASU. To drag RU into the question, by trying to link the NO to the RU and thereby to the political differences between RU and STO is red-baiting pure and simple. Moreover, it is totally irrelevant to the subject at issue. We cannot for the life of us -- if the letter was meant to be honest -- understand how the authors could raise these points after they had been answered in detail before the entire National GI Conference.

First of all, invitations were sent out to MAC/Wildcat to attend the conference -- as Denny and Jane Curimins and Art Graves know full well. They were at the GI Conference where this matter was raised and resolved. When we were asked about this we said that MAC had indeed been sent an invitation. When we discovered that they had apparently not received this first effort, we sent them



a second. And for what it's worth, we discovered this not through any phone call from Bob Anyon but from a member of MAC we happened to meet at a forum in Chicago.

The point of all this, however, is that the 3 members of the St. Louis chapter that attended the GI Conference, Denny, Jane and Art, knew these to be the facts so why did they raise them in the letter of "criticism." Given the fact that Rich Bangert, formerly of the National Office and the National GI Project and now a member of the St. Louis chapter, carefully explained to the chapter that he had personally sent out the invitation to MAC, this is even harder to understand. Did people decide that Rich was lying? It certainly seems so from the letter finally sent.

As to the question of excluding the ASU: yes, it is true they were excluded from the GI Conference. Nor should it have been otherwise! It is the official policy of VVAW/WSO to not work with ASU. The ASU is a trotskyite organization and is an enemy of the people's movement. In excluding them, we were upholding VVAW/WSO organizational policy -- a very sound one in our opinion. The St. Louis letter was correct in stating that it was because of political differences that the ASU was excluded: but we would like to point out that these were not the personal collective opinions of the National Office, as the letter states, but the position of the National Steering Committee. If the St. Louis chapter disagrees with this policy and feels that VVAW/WSO should in fact work with trotskyite organizations, it should take the matter up with the NSC and not the NO.

As a final point on the ASU matter, the letter of Nov. 12th states that the NO "was criticized by the conference as a whole for the way in which this was done," (excluding ASU, etc). In reply to this charge, all we can say is we must have been at two different conferences because we certainly weren't aware of being "criticized by the conference as a whole" for having kept a trotskyite organization out of the Conference. Simply stated, these are not the facts of the matter. Might we ask Denny, Jane and Art, obviously the source of this amazing revelation, where in the world they came by it?

2. In the section of your letter summing up the National GI Conference, there are a few basic points made that should be spoken to. First of all, throughout the letter of criticism there runs a very elitist, condescending attitude towards VVAW/WSO's GI organizing. The letter states that the decision to host the National GI Conference was made after deciding to "get more involved in GI work" when in fact our goals were to try and build more programmatic unity within the GI movement. The statements about how "VVAW/WSO is joining the GI movement -- not starting it" or how "the National Office collective, as yet, has relatively little experience with GI work" are untrue to begin with. But there is an inference being made which is clearly saying something else: "Who are you to come into the GI movement and tell us how to run it? ... You'd better remember to keep your place as you are still a bunch of young upstarts." Aside from the fact that VVAW/WSO as an organization has considerable experience in GI organizing, aside from the fact that numerous VVAW/WSO members have been doing consistent GI organizing over a period of

years, such an elitist condescending attitude can serve no purpose and at best is non-productive. But more seriously, it represents an attitude that is dangerously counter-organizational and aimed at running the organization down -- not building it up.

3. Further on in your summation of the Conference, the letter delves into the discussion around the Armed Forces Day proposal that the NO put forth. As should be evident from the thoroughly negative way Denny, Jane and Art have characterized the Armed Forces Day proposal, they fought against it every step of the way at the Chicago GI Conference. They have totally ignored the fact that the NO was not the only VVAW/WSO project represented at the GI Conference that supported the proposal. Yes, there were criticisms of it, and yes, many did feel that the general slogan was inextricably bound up with the concept of the united front against imperialism. But, there was still a clear organizational mandate to support some form of demonstration or activity on Armed Forces Day (as decided at the Buffalo National Steering Committee Meeting). And rather than try to achieve some basic form of unity around holding these demonstrations or actions on Armed Forces Day, the 3 delegates from GI Assistance Project, all members of the St. Louis chapter, did everything they could to see that there would be no such unity. At the end of the discussion it was clear that there was absolutely no real unity on the proposal and that voting on demands for the actions would serve no purpose other than to obstruct the situation. For this reason, the NO suggested that the matter be dropped and that no demands be voted on by the conference.

4. On page 3 of the Nov. 12th letter, a statement made by a member of the MAC/Wildcat organization during the criticism-self-criticism session is quoted: "The most disturbing thing about the conference was the self-conscious and juvenile way some people responded to the WAM (Workers Action Movement) people at the hotel. It bordered on racism in many cases. We should be clear enough to see that people who happen to belong to another political organization are still in the same fight. And most of the WAM folks were third world workers." The implication the letter is trying to make is that somehow the entire conference was acting childish towards them, and further, that WAM is in the same fight as VVAW/WSO. We take severe issue with this. While there are many honest forces in WAM, we believe that its politics are bankrupt, trotskyite reflections of the leading organizers of WAM -- largely members of the Progressive Labor Party, a well-known trotskyite organization also named in VVAW/WSO's policy on unprincipled organizations. Just because there are many 3rd World workers in WAM does not make it progressive. There are also many 3rd World workers in the Democratic and Republican parties. So what? Does the presence of 3rd World people in these organizations mean that these organizations are progressive or are in the "same fight?" We'd rather think not. But in response to the inference of "racist" treatment of the WAM members by Conference delegates, we'd refer to the letter of the Chicago chapter to the St. Louis chapter. During the conference, the Chicago VVAW/WSO chapter pulled security duty outside the meeting hall and talked with many members of the WAM convention being held in the hotel in an entirely principled manner. The point of all this tempest in a teapot is that the members of the St. Louis chapter who attended the conference have tried to manufacture a non-incident around WAM and

make it a key, "burning" issue of the Conference -- one pointing to the underlying racism of all the white delegates to the conference. They do this to try and make some political yardage about their theories of "white blindspot," and the inherent racism of white people. (We will speak more about this further on in our letter).

5. On page 4 of the St. Louis letter, there are 3 points of criticism leveled at the National Office. Point one deals with the scheduling of workshops. It sounds fine until the final line when it says that: "because we believe that NO perspective on national and sexual oppression IMPEDED the work of the conference." (Emphasis ours). We ask you how did it impede the work of the conference? Are you saying that it was out intent? Didn't the 3 members of the St. Louis chapter attending the CI Conference listen when we stated that there should have been different kinds of workshops going on at the same time so that all questions could be taken up? Did not Denny, Jane and Art receive a copy of our proposed agenda before the conference and thus have time to raise their objections to the proposed agenda before the conference? And how come they chose to ignore the fact that most of the other VVAW/WSO delegates were also arguing for our agenda proposal?

Point 2 on page 4 of the St. Louis letter deals with the program proposal the NO made regarding Armed Forces Day actions. The letter condemns the NO for only allotting time to discuss its own proposal saying that "this put the NO in the position -- rather arrogant, in our judgment -- of highlighting their proposal and slighting the others." This is an outright distortion of what occurred. We set up a workshop on our proposal, by name, because it was the only pre-conference proposal that had been submitted. We stated then, and we state now, that we actively encouraged other proposals to be submitted to the conference. There were many months time in which to do this, but before people arrived in Chicago, ours was the only one that had been submitted. As the conference discussed the agenda, we explained that we had no intention of only discussing the VVAW/WSO proposal at the conference and agreed that the workshop should discuss all proposals that conference participants cared to submit. To imply that we were trying to somehow prevent other conference delegates from presenting their proposals, as is done in this point of the St. Louis letter, is totally false.

Point 3 on page 4 deals with the struggle that evolved around trying to decide on an agenda. We agree that there was a somewhat defensive position on our part in the agenda discussion, but there was also a great deal of very openly anti-VVAW/WSO feeling that resulted in the problems we had arriving at an agenda. Much of what was being struggled around was not so much what was being said, but who was saying it: i.e. VVAW/WSO. To point the finger at the NO as the "culprit" in having prolonged the agenda discussion is a gross distortion of what actually occurred. And why is it incorrect, we ask you, to stand behind the practice of OUR national organizational meeting? We have learned a great deal about holding large meetings in the past four years. We heard what the other proposals were and thought they were wrong, pure and simple. For that matter, we still feel that the conference would have proceeded much better if our basic agenda was followed.

6. On page 4 of the St. Louis letter, there are five points made in a section titled "the agenda." The first of these deals with a banner which said, "Don't

the Anti-Imperialist GI Movement, Unite to Fight All Oppression," that was placed on the wall of the conference meeting room. The Nov. 12th letter refers to the banner as though it was a threat of some kind, even going so far as to characterize it as a "pre-emptive first strike." We see nothing wrong, especially when VVAW/WSO organizes an event, in putting forward slogans on a wall. We also feel that other organizations have that same right. We had discussed this slogan with others in VVAW/WSO before the conference, never having dreamed it could have possibly offended anybody.

Point 2 on page 4 attacks the NO for not "tying its theory to practice even when pressed to do so." Aside from being a calculated lie, this is a direct attack on the entire organization. It is saying that VVAW/WSO should not have national leadership that is responsible for coordinating its national GI work. 'Since that leadership, by definition of its tasks, cannot be primarily engaged in direct mass work, its opinions and leadership should be disregarded' That is objectively what is being said here in the letter. While the NO does not engage in direct mass work, we are responsible for knowing what our projects are doing and what they have done. VVAW/WSO, contrary to the characterization of the Nov. 12th letter, is not "new" to the GI movement. There have been many active-duty chapters and members for years. This statement denies our organizational experience with GI work, denies our collective experience and practice in GI work, and instead maintains that the only people who have any right to speak on the GI movement are those actively engaged in direct mass work. We utterly disagree with this position for it is in fact an attempt to liquidate the very meaning of a national organization.

Point 3 on page 4 attacks the NO for its position on the national and woman questions. Again, we must condemn the way the authors of this letter know how to distort and obscure a point. It was not that most of the VVAW/WSO delegates or the NO were opposed to independent 3rd World or women's organizations in the GI movement -- and we said this time and time again at the conference. The place where we take issue with the letter's position is where it is said that it is ESSENTIAL for there to be separate 3rd World and women's organizations for there to be real unity. Again, this statement, we feel, flows directly out of the "white blindspot" theories that the 3 members of the St. Louis chapter attending the GI conference hold to (and that are followed by many of the other, non-VVAW/WSO GI projects that attended the conference). To us, it is a sign of weakness that any organization must divide its membership along sexual or racial lines in order to have "meaningful unity." We are opposed to raising independent caucuses/organizations to the level of a principle. And we will stick by this position.

Point 4 on page 4 deals with the question of homosexuality; and again distorts the NO's position. Contrary to what is said here, members of the National Collective do have positions on the question of homosexuality and did put it forward at the conference as clearly as we could. However, when speaking for the national organization, we made it clear that VVAW/WSO as an organization does not have a position on homosexuality, pro or con.

Point 5 on page 4 deals with a remark made by a member of the NO to a member of VVAW/WSO in which a statement made by the MAC delegate was termed as

"reminiscing." We find it dispicable that such a petty incident should be thrown up in the face of the NO as "proof positive" of our nastiness. The person who made the remark was criticized by the conference, apologized to the person and never repeated it. The eyes and ears of the 3 St. Louis chapter members must have also been on selective tuning as they neglected to go on to tell the rest of the St. Louis chapter that the next person to speak was also from the NO. He thanked the MAC delegate for giving a historical example to make his point (one trying to prove the worthlessness of Armed Forces Day demonstrations, and one which we clearly do not agree with), as you say you wished we had done. Perhaps we have refreshed the memory of the 3 delegates from St. Louis. But the question is, why did they choose to ignore this? We can only conclude it was because of an intentional desire to distort the practice of the National Office and slander it.

7. On the last page of the St. Louis letter, the final attack on the NO is made in regards to the report in the National Newsletter concerning the conference. We again state that the newsletter was never meant to be the final work on the conference, and that we would try to do a more solid analysis in the GI workshop held Nov. 29th to Dec. 1st. The notes from the workshop and the notes from the GI conference have been prepared and distributed. If this was not made clear in the National Newsletter, we certainly tried to make it so. As to whether the NO proposal is inextricably tied up with the concept of the united front against imperialism, we repeat that at the time it was developed, it was not discussed around the UFAL, nor did we feel that people had to accept the UFAL to unite with our proposal.

The second point on page 5 holds that the National Office was "too self-congratulatory" in our statement that the conference was an important first step in developing a program for GI organizing that is based on solid political theory. It goes on to state that "we dislike the implication that, but for this conference, such theory would not have been developing." We ask you, what implication? It was an important first step after years of isolation within the GI movement and from the two-year decline the GI movement has been in. We never stated that the theory for the GI movement would not have developed but for the GI Conference. The letter of the St. Louis chapter makes this point as though the Conference was a total bust and that no one but the NO felt that, despite all the struggles that went on, it was worth a damn. Again, the bitter and overwhelmingly negative attitude that is reflected here is hard to understand.

The 3rd point on page five is centered around the summation in the Newsletter regarding the struggle for the demands on the Armed Forces Day proposal. We suggest that people writing the letter should re-read the newsletter. The statement contained here is pulled out of context and blown all out of proportion. We do, in fact, think that one of the reasons that people opposed our proposal, the demands, the slogan, etc., was simply because it was viewed as a VVAW/WSO proposal. We did comment on the high level of struggle that went on during the conference. We still see it that way. However, it was obvious that by the end of the conference what we had really done was to clarify positions on the basic questions facing the GI movement -- not building anything resembling real unity. If there is a "cheap shot" being taken, as the letter states, we feel that the ones taking it are

the writers of this letter who are making such a vitriolic public attack on the NO for a statement made in an internal organizational newsletter.

At the bottom of page 3 in the "Critique of the NO Role Around the GI Organizing Conference" the letter begins by saying that the criticisms of the NO are raised in "hopes of influencing the theory and practice of the National Office Collective." We feel that this was the last thing in the minds of the individuals that actually wrote this letter. We feel that the distortions of our positions and our practice made in the letter of criticism from the St. Louis chapter come not from a desire to help us or to struggle with us, but from a very dishonest desire to discredit and trash the NO and the organization. The kernels of what we feel were the real purposes of the authors of this letter are contained in the last sentence of the letter: "We will share our criticisms with all who attended the conference especially so those whose motives and commitment were SLANDERED by the NO (emphasis ours) know that the NO has been criticized." This, we feel, is getting down to what the authors of this letter really had in mind: to split and wreck VVAW/WSO. This was made clear at the Thanksgiving work weekend when everyone there agreed that this letter was in essence, a wrecking and splitting document, and that in essence, the authors were not doing this in an organizational way, but had removed themselves from the organization.

The NO takes the letter of criticism of the GI workshop a step further; we don't think it was any accident that it was a splitting and wrecking document. We think that this was the very intent of its authors. We think their motives were unprincipled and dishonest. We feel that the three members of the St. Louis chapter that attended the GI conference, Denny Cummins, Jane Cummins and Art Graves, are more than merely people that have serious political differences with the NO. We feel that they are anything but our comrades, or our brothers and sisters.

Why do we say this? It is not that we can't have political disagreements over any number of questions and still be comrades and sisters and brothers. Any organization will have political struggle and we think that is healthy; in fact without that struggle there will never be principled unity. However, there is a real difference between struggle meant to unify and clarify, and attacks and slanders meant to split and divide people against each other. We believe that the authors of the St. Louis letter had the second aspect in mind and clearly never intended to struggle with us to either achieve unity or clarify their differences with us. This is clear from the fact that no attempt was made in any manner whatever to talk with the NO before the publication of this letter. This could not have happened accidentally, that is, the intention was precisely to put the letter out in this way.

The distortions and lies that are contained in the letter were no accident either. As we have stated in the detailed response, there were things in the St. Louis letter that were clear misrepresentations of what occurred at the conference, after several of those points had been openly answered at the conference by us. We think it was intentional that these points were included for the sole purpose of discrediting us, splitting us from the organizational delegates that were there and wrecking our chances of conducting principled discussions with other organizations doing GI work.

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The author's complete ignoring of VVAW/WSO national policy regarding trotskyite organizations and their defense of them can only be attributed to their clear sympathy for these enemies of the people. We stated this organizational policy at the conference, it's in the by-laws that every chapter possesses and was most assuredly explained to the authors. That we should be attacked at the GI work weekend by Art Graves for purging the Fu Lewis chapter of VVAW, an action taken by the National Steering Committee, after the chapter had been taken over by PLP, when he knew full well why that was done, can only be seen by the organization as a condemnation of its attempts to deal with these trotskyite enemies.

Finally, we characterize this letter as opportunist, as flowing from tactics and ways of conducting the struggle that has characterized opportunists throughout the movement's history. We say this because we see no attempt on the part of the author's to carry this struggle out in a principled way. To take one aspect in isolation would be fruitless, as no overall picture would come of it, but taking all these things together--the content of the letter, the manner in which it was published, and the lies and distortions--can only lead to an analysis that points to opportunism.

Given the thinking of the GI work weekend regarding this letter, we think that the St Louis chapter must look deeply into what has come about. The NO has had differences with the St Louis chapter before, but they have never taken on this character. In our mutual struggles around the content of Winter Soldier, for example, both the St Louis chapter and the NO never resorted to lies, distortions, or airing our criticisms in front of the whole movement. Why is this so? We think it is because certain members of the St Louis chapter never intended that the NO and the chapter should have principled struggle, and only meant to divide us against each other. That this should also happen with three people that we have had expressively little contact with before the GI Conference must indicate that there is more going on than meets the eye in regards to their motivation.

We can have no unity with people who trash and wreck in an effort to see their politics in command. The chapter may think that our reply is trashing, but we don't think it is. It is an exposure of real attempts to split our organization and divide us against each other. It is a response to politics that can only be termed outright reactionary in their manifestations. The NO will not see VVAW/WSO attacked in such an underhanded manner without fiercely struggling against it, nor do we think that VVAW/WSO can survive if we allow such activities to take place.

It is not like the authors of this letter are new to the movement and are just now trying to analyze things and develop a position on the questions facing the movement. They have put forward at the GI conference and at the work weekend a clear position on any number of questions--"white blind spot," "GIs are workers," "independent power bases for third world GIs and women," etc. Yet at the same time this has been done in a very dishonest way, with backtracking, denials, and tears left and right. Why are these people trying to pass themselves off in this way, and why are they not openly declaring these positions?

The NO openly and boldly puts forward its positions and we do not shrink from the fact that these positions may coincide with those of other organizations, communist or not. Yet the authors of the St Louis letter, at the recent GI work weekend, got very upset when we pressed them on their political line. Why are they trying to hide? It is slimy and deceitful and we condemn it for that.

We end by saying that we think it a serious setback that the St Louis chapter lent its name to the letter, especially without serious struggle with us first: particularly when one of your members, Rich Bangert, disavowed every point being made. Up until this letter was published, the St Louis chapter had always carried out its politics and practice in a very forthright manner, always as part of the national organization. It is indeed sad to see sectarianism and factionalism spring from it. We deeply hope that the chapter will repudiate this letter and move towards a real, principled struggle that is facing the entire organization.



(APPENDIX 1)

21 November 1974

VVAW/WSO  
1023 Allen Ave  
St Louis, MO 63104

Dear Friends,

As you might imagine, we received your letter of November 12th with a good deal of interest. We found it rather unfortunate that such a strong statement could have been written by the St. Louis Chapter without there having been so much as a phone call to the NO that might have at least discussed what are obviously very hostile opinions of this office. There was certainly no need to take such an extreme course of action as seen in your letter of 12 November; let alone to have sent such a statement to other organizations without going through internal VVAW/WSO procedures and struggle beforehand.

Be that as it may, we would like to briefly respond to a few of the points raised in your letter relevant to the upcoming VVAW/WSO GI workshop--we will deal with the larger issues concerning the Chicago GI Conference and the charges of sectarian political manipulation in more detail at a later date.

1. As you will note in the enclosed section from Newsletter #30, the initial call for the VVAW/WSO GI workshop to be held this Nov 29th in Chicago was to VVAW/WSO chapters doing active GI work. We laid out the reasons for this criteria as: "first of all, the logistics involved--we simply don't have the capability of putting up more than 10-15 people. Secondly, this will be a working session and is not a familiarization course on the GI movement. Those chapters doing GI work were invited to the National GI Conference and they are the only ones that should plan on sending delegates to the GI workshop on Thanksgiving." We feel that this was stated as clearly as possible in the Newsletter and won't repeat it here. We did not invite VVAW/WSO members to the Chicago GI Conference that have done GI organizing; there are many; nor did we invite VVAW/WSO members who are doing GI organizing now for another organization and not as VVAW/WSO projects; among others we felt that Art Graves and Denny and Jane Cummins fell in this category--as representatives of GIAP. (Bart Lubou was the one exception to this at the Chicago Conference--he was an observer invited to serve as a resource person to show the slides of the Japan projects.) etc.

2. While we knew that Art, Denny and Jane were members of the St. Louis Chapter of VVAW/WSO, they were invited to the Chicago GI Conference and accepted on the basis of --representatives of the GIAP, not as VVAW/WSO. As VVAW/WSO members attending the conference they naturally attended our organizational causes; all of our members at the conference were encouraged to do so. But that had nothing to do with their attendance at the Conference in the first place. We had pointedly excluded all VVAW/WSO chapters and members who were not doing active GI work from the Conference. If we had not we would never have been able to hold the conference. It would have been swamped with VVAW/WSO members who just wanted to attend the conference and see what was going on (and it would have utterly alienated the non-VVAW/WSO GI projects that attended). But more to the point, people that did not have current practices with the GI movement.

all for the matter, could not have contributed to the conference on the basis of their practice.

As we understood it, Art, Denny and Jane came to Chicago representing the GIAP, a non-VVAW/WSO project funded by the AFSC. They were invited then as GIAP, not as VVAW/WSO.

3. At the very beginning of the Chicago GI Conference Lenny stated that the GIAP was not doing any active GI organizing.

4. At no time before, during or after the Chicago GI Conference were we ever told that GIAP was a project of VVAW/WSO's, that it actively worked on VVAW/WSO projects or activities or that it used VVAW/WSO's newspapers, Winter Soldier and GI News.

5. Since then, as you have indicated in your letter of 12 Nov., GIAP is in fact a project of VVAW/WSO and the St. Louis Chapter is doing active GI organizing. We certainly did not know this. And particularly given the statements of Denny Cummins at the Chicago GI Conference that GIAP was not doing any active GI organizing as of the present, this was a very easy error to make. We feel, however, that the responsibility for having advised us of this situation rests with the St. Louis Chapter and not with the NO. We are not mind readers. Further, we feel that the St. Louis Chapter decided to inform us of the actual situation in terms of its GI organizing in a very uncomradely manner. Instead of calling us on the phone, writing us a letter, etc., the matter was announced in a letter filled with some extremely strong accusations and sent out to the entire GI movement. We still cannot understand the rationale for this. Not only were normal VVAW/WSO internal procedures or struggle not exhausted, they were not even used at all.

6. A final point. Your letter of Nov. 12th stated: "we think it short sighted that they (the NO) have not encouraged any and all members in VVAW/WSO who have done, or are doing, GI work to come to this workshop..." In all seriousness we must ask how in the world you can make such a statement. We have literally dozens and dozens of VVAW/WSO members who could be expected to attend the workshop meeting based on such a broad criteria. At last count we already have something on the order of 12 people planning on attending the November 29th workshop; all who have current practice doing VVAW/WSO GI organizing. If we invited all those VVAW/WSO members who have done GI work in the past, we would not only be unable to arrange for the necessary logistical support needed to handle the numbers but feel that is would be very impractical in terms of actually dealing with the tasks of the workshop. This was meant to be a working session of people in the organization actively involved in the field of GI work for VVAW/WSO--just as we have done with the previous workshops on defense committee work. While we agree that there is a definite need to have a workshop open to all VVAW/WSO members who are doing VVAW/WSO GI work, have done it, or may do it in the future--(and we would like to see something like this in the near future)--this workshop is not the proper place for it. The initial criteria for attendance at the workshop, we feel, was and is sound and will lend itself to completing the tasks at hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

We realize that this only covers some of the points raised in your letter and we fully intend to deal with the rest at a later date. Meanwhile we hope this will answer some of the immediate questions you had concerning our planning for the Nov 29th GI workshop. Since, as you have pointed out, St. Louis VVAW/VSO is doing GI work we sincerely hope you will be able to attend the workshop. If, as you pointed out, housing can be arranged independently it would help out the Chicago Chapter a good deal. Please advise us who will be coming to the meeting.

In Struggle,

Brian Adams  
National Office VVAW/VSO

encl: Page 11-13 Newsletter #30.

P. S. Please bring an analysis of the chapter's GI work to the Chicago meeting.

We will probably begin by summarizing our various work reports before we get into the specifics of the workshop. Any working papers you care to present should also be brought with you.

P. P. S. We specifically want to invite Rich Bangert to the workshop. As past national coordinator for the GI Project we feel his presence there is extremely important.

Some Notes and Comments on the National Office Position Paper  
and the Majority Report from the 13th NSCM by Snake (Southern Calif. Sub-  
regional Coordinator)

Before making any other points about the National Office Position Paper and the NSCM Majority report, a definition of "focus" might be helpful. Focus: a central point; a center of activity, attraction, or attention. Focalize: (1) to bring or come to a focus; to focus (2) to confine, or become confined to a limited area. (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary) It would seem that "focus" is a narrowing or limiting by definition, despite what the Majority Report and the Position Paper say to the contrary.

First I'll attempt to deal with a few parts of the Majority report from the 13th NSCM, page 7. The Majority report states (that a vets and G.I. focus is) "In fact, this position is the present practice of most chapters of VVAW/WSO." I doubt that this is true, unless Amnesty and Indochina are supposed to be considered as solely vets and G.I. issues, which they are not.

The Majority report also states, in relation to chapters working on whatever projects in their community seem to be the best way to draw in people, that "It works from anti-imperialism in the sky to an anti-imperialist organization searching for a cause to take up." but the National Office Position Paper states "anti-imperialists need not go searching for contradictions to organize people around; there are plenty already in existence." (pg. 2), and "that people should be organized around that particular contradiction which oppresses them." It doesn't seem to be "anti-imperialism in the sky" if there are plenty of contradictions around and a chapter is working on one or more of them. I do agree that a person should work on the contradiction that most oppresses him/her, but with a number of people in a chapter, each with different contradictions oppressing him/her, a very wide range exists for a chapter to pick from. The "particular contradiction" aspect also opens up the question of being a veteran and something else at the same time (unemployed, being a woman, being a worker, etc.) I would guess that for most veterans, being a vet means being an ex-G.I. and that's all. Most vets have had no contact with the V.A. and haven't used their G.I. 'benefits', so a contradiction in the other "half" of the dual nature of being a vet must be the primary oppressive contradiction to most veterans.

The Majority report also states "One of the best things VVAW/WSO did yet in support of Gary Lawton was the D.C. demo." This may be true, but the best thing VVAW/WSO has done for Gary is to actually have a group of people out in Riverside working to get him freed. Also, again by definition, a vets and G.I. focus would place future Gary Lawtons in a very low priority when choosing what work will be done.

pg. 1 The next part of my notes deals with the National Office Position Paper itself. As each point comes up, I'll put the page number that it can be found on in the left margin. The first point is that "--- as long as there is struggle, there is growth." is false in many cases, especially when looked at in the context of a single organization. A look at how many organizations have fallen apart due to internal struggles would verify this, destroying them even in many cases when one faction had the "correct line".

pg. 2 The National Office Position Paper stated "Dimitroff stressed that a united front is a "unity of action" directed against the common enemy--in our case, imperialism." This is a distortion, "unity of action" is a pre-requisite for the establishment of the united front, not the united front itself. Dimitroff states "Because unity of action to repel the offensive of capital and of fascism is possible and necessary even before the majority of the workers are united on a common political platform for the overthrow of capitalism, while the working out of unity of views on the main lines and aims of the struggle of the proletariat, without which a unification of the parties is impossible, requires a more or less extended period of time. And unity of views is worked out best of all in joint struggle against the class enemy even today." These criteria aren't met in the U.S. at the present time. There is no unity of views in the movement today, which is to be expected, but there is no unity of action either. Most of the cadre, party or party building organizations won't even work together in demonstration coalitions, much less in a united front. And working together in joint struggle against the class enemy is indeed the best way to gain the unity of views that will be necessary to finally overthrow capitalism. To place "the focus" in an imaginary united front that hasn't formed yet would be at best premature, and at worst

pg 3

situation in the United States really is, rather than what we would like it to be.

In talking about principal contradictions, the National Office Position Paper states "— and veterans will organize around the contradictions between themselves having fought an imperialist war and returning to an imperialist society." This is an admission of the dual nature of being a veteran. The first part, participation in an imperialist war, would be the Vietnam-military experience, the knowledge from this experience is used in the struggle to stop the war in Indochina, the fight for amnesty, against repression in the military, etc. This "experience" is in the past, and can probably no longer be the primary contradiction in a vet's life, except for people with acute cases of P.V.S. which are effectively "living in the past".

The present contradictions lie in the "returning home to an imperialist society" part. These would include V.A. hospital conditions for V.A. patients, poor G.I. Bill benefits for vet students, job discrimination against vets with bad discharges, but for the vast majority of vets the primary contradiction that oppresses them would be unemployment, inflation, low wages at work, pitiful working conditions, oppression by the police, racism, sexism, etc. Even the students and some of the V.A. patients will end up in the work force again, so their primary contradiction will change. It would seem that the contradictions related to the economic aspects directly or indirectly (poor V.A. conditions, job discrimination towards badly discharged vets, lousy G.I. Bill) would be the primary ones to most vets. These economic contradictions all come from the primary contradiction between labor (the working class) and capital (the bourgeoisie) and have little or nothing to do with being a vet. I think Marx would agree.

pg. 7

To again quote the Position Paper, "To again refer to Dimitrov, the united front is a "broad mobilization" of the masses; it becomes obvious that the millions of people necessary to constitute a "broad mobilization" of the masses simply aren't there at the present time. This again points to a failure to analyze the concrete situation in the U.S.

pg. 4

Using the D.C. demo as an example of a united front action is a weak example at best. A coalition effort is closer to the truth. I went to the D.C. demo myself and there were few if any people solely representing women's groups, unemployed people, and not as many members of nationality groups as one would consider necessary for a united front action. Basically, what there was was one 'party' cadre organization, the Revolutionary Union (and almost no C.P., C.L., C.L.B., B.W.C., left Democrats, etc.) one student organization, the Revolutionary Student Brigade (an A.S. affiliate), and some workers organizations (the United Farmworkers among them). A united front it wasn't, a good group action it was.

pg. 8

On page 8 the quote "For G.I.'s in the organization, the oppression of the military is a fact of life, for veterans it is an unforgettable experience." This further backs up what was mentioned earlier about this experience being in the past. It also allows me to say that I do not intend to downgrade the importance of G.I. struggles, we should do G.I. work wherever we can because military service is indeed the primary point of oppression for G.I.'s and because they are part of our base.

pgs. 9-13

A comment on the "Brief History of VVAW/ASO": The war in Indochina is mentioned over and over again. It is clear that anti-war activity was our primary focus, and not vets' problems, even though our base was G.I.'s and vets. It also suggests that the war's manifestations in the U.S., such as inflation, a lack of social services due to military spending, unemployment etc. must be some of the reasons vets resisted the war upon their return.

pgs. 11-12

The National Office also blames the lack of support for the Gainesville action on our failure to build a united front and the 'fact' that we were unfocused. I think that we were focused, although not formally on paper, around the Indochina war, and after the signing of the Paris 'peace', we suffered the same "post war letdown" that every other anti-war organization suffered from. The Gainesville action was in the middle of that period when we were trying to keep ourselves together and rearrange our priorities, even though most of us had no illusions that the U.S. was through in Indochina. I tend to think outside organizations tended to look at Gainesville charges as though they were an internal VVAW/ASO matter and not a national crisis. This also points to a disunited movement that was not ready for a united front. Our own consciousness at that time was not as high as it is today on the necessity for at least preparing to build a united front.

pg. 14-16 The VVAW/ASO is the movement' concept is a fat strawman with few or no 'bones' to support it. The number of people who believe this must be very few, and couldn't possibly constitute a major trend within the organization. The same goes for the "VVAW/ASO is the united front" concept. Basically the same goes for the "VVAW/ASO as a cadre organization," although there are some tendencies that point to that as a growing trend; a steadily increasing number of people in VVAW/ASO are also members or are affiliated with cadre organizations, an increasing subordination of chapters to sub-regions, Regions, and the National Collective, increasing sectarianism within the organization, etc.

pg. 16 "Depending on the particular conditions, it may, in fact, be best for the movement and the individual that they organize not as veterans but as workers, students, etc. around worker or student issues-- as the case may be." This is a further concession that the primary points of oppression for vets are generally not vets issues.

pg. 18 "If it were not for our involvement in Indochina, there would be no Vietnam veterans in need of vets' benefits in the first place." Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism is the cause of vets' problems. "The real struggle must be waged against the problem-- imperialism-- and not its symptoms." This backs up the position that our focus should be anti-imperialism quite well.

pg. 20 In number 2 on page 20, the National Office Position Paper states that we will probably lose members with a vets and G.I. focus. It is precisely those members who make it necessary for us to deal with sexism and vets' chauvinism, non-veteran men and women, who we will lose with a vets and G.I. focus. The tendency towards a regression to pre-Winter Soldier days would be heightened ten-fold with the loss of these members.

The argument that these members won't be lost to the movement is also partially false. Our past history is full of people who were in transition towards good anti-imperialist politics that have left the organization and the movement because of internal dissention over whether or not to deal with problems such as sexism, racism, and vets' chauvinism that our objectives may be most best dealt with. A good number of people who "quit or revolt" a new organization may leave VVAW/ASO feeling as though they were treated like 2nd class citizens, creating anti-VVAW/ASO feelings in a movement which desperately needs all the unity it can get.

pg. 20 Number 3 on page 20 gives examples of outside organizations seeing us as a vets and G.I. based anti-war focused organization. These may well be false. "Vets for McGovern" was to focus on anti-war issues to support McGovern's position on the war. The focus in this case was not vets, but the base was. Nixon's Watergate activity also supported this view of VVAW/ASO. I think that the P.M.U., the D.R.K. of Korea, the C.R.U.S.A., etc. would agree as well.

pg. 20 The point (in relation to R.U.) that "It's not who puts the line forward, but what the line is." is correct as far as it goes. But only a fool would not ask the reason why the line is being put forward. Is R.U.'s position based on genuine concern for building a united front with a strong vets and G.I. movement within it, or is it an opportunistic maneuver by R.U. to bring VVAW/ASO into their conception of the united front as a "finger" with themselves as the controlling "palm" both by outside persuasion (principled) and by infiltrating their members (unprincipled) into VVAW/ASO to make sure we decide to agree with them. This is a key question that everyone must answer for themselves. I would recommend that everyone study R.U. past and present history and current positions both from R.U. people (& literature) and from other sources such as the October League & Black Workers' Congress people (& literature) that have opposed them in the past. Specifically, find out how the R.U. has dealt with other non-cadre organizations, such as the Iranian Students and the U.S.-China Friendship Organizations and various demonstration coalitions in your area. A good 'neutral' source that has nothing to gain one way or the other is 'The Guardian', an independent Marxist-Leninist newspaper that has had many debates among movement groups, (including R.U.) as well as news that shows how these organizations function in practice in unions, national group struggles, demonstration coalitions, etc. Then on the basis of your own study you can form your own opinion, which will be much more well thought out than it would be if you relied on a friend for information. The future of VVAW/ASO is in your hands.

pg. 21 On the question of whether or not our support of the Indochinese people will decrease, I wonder. If our work on vets and G.I. issues plus our work on other issues equals our total work, then clearly it stands to reason that increasing our vets and G.I. work

EAD

FORWARD FOR THE GI MOVEMENT

Position Paper From Highway 13

All over the world the Imperialist powers are in trouble. Internationally and nationally they find they can't maintain the profits they need to exist, and they are dragging the rest of the capitalist system down with them: This is an excellent situation for all anti-Imperialist forces to strike. Our present task is to stop them (the US imperialists and Soviet social imperialists) from involving the world in another war to save their slimy necks. They would prefer to do like they did in Vietnam. That is, to revitalize their economy by gearing up for war production, by crushing social movements, and by controlling the raw materials and labor power of the Indo-Chinese people. But as they found out, this was just another trap because the Vietnamese not only defeated the Imperialists but also were the spark that led to the development of the Anti-Imperialist Movement around the world.

For the anti-Imperialist movement of GI's, this is a special concern. GI's will face clearly their objective role in society. This role, as an armed force of the state, kept separate from the population, as a public power, will constantly be throwing them up against the working and oppressed people of this country and the world. But the anti-Imperialist Movement sees a chance to change this in the Middle East. Because of the war Indo-China, GI's and American people as a whole are not willing to participate in any further wars. We have learned too much about the imperialist system and how it works, to easily fall for the same flag waving game. But they can't give up. They need new lands to exploit like a vampire needs blood. They see their salvation in the Middle East for two reasons; first, it has for a long time been a point of contention between imperialist powers. This is because of its rich supply of oil and cheap labor to produce it. Control of this land would help each of them (US & USSR) to gain the position of the King of the Mountain of the Imperialist camp. Second they have the best chance of duping the American people into another war. How? Recently the Zionists have been sending some of their big guns to this country, like Abba Eban and Moshe Dayan to build support of sending troops into the Middle East to help them to control the area and to aid in their attempted extermination of the Palestinian people. To do this they tell the Jewish community that the Arabs want to drive them into the sea raising the call for Jewish Nationalism.

We oppose all involvement in all Imperialist wars and we must start now to educate the masses of people especially GI's about why they should oppose these types of wars. We must also develop a mass anti-Imperialist GI movement that will take up the day to day fight for these demands:..

- 1) US troops out of Indo-China, Middle East, Europe etc.
- 2) Abolish special units like Special Forces, Sea Bees, CID etc.
- 3) Disarming of the National Guard and special riot police for civil disturbances
- 4) ~~Abolition~~ The right to leave the service whenever the soldier desires
- 5) The right to serve in your own home area

Because of the crisis of unemployment that exist today, many people are enlisting in the military because they need a job and are forced to take the only alternative they have. This is especially important when considering the increased number of Black and third world GI's: This creates a favorable situation for organizing GI's around working and living conditions and around National oppression.

Some of these demands in connection with Legal rights and economic position of the soldier:

- 1) Increased pay for soldiers
- 2) Improved maintenance-health, barracks, clothing
- 3) ~~Abolition~~ of the UCMJ-Article 15 etc.

- 4) Abolition of compulsory saluting
- 5) Severe penalties for officers and NCO's hitting a Enlisted Person
- 6) The right to determine length of hair
- 7) The right to call in sick
- 8) extra pay while on leave
- 9) Right to marry whoever you want
- 10) Extra pay for family
- 11) Right to buy and sell newspapers
- 12) Right to unionize
- 13) Right to attend political meetings without harrassment
- 14) One discharge system
- 15) Enlistment Bonus or out

National Demands:

- 1) Promotions by seniority
- 2) Use of native languages for drilling and instructions
- 3) End All Racial and National oppression
- 4) Military service in their own home towns

Special Demands around the oppression of women:

- 1) Right to get family housing
- 2) Only 1 command
- 3) Open job classifications up
- 4) Maternity leave with extra pay
- 5) Special medical care

It must be emphasized that these demands raised around National, women's and GI's oppression as a whole should be raised as demands for the whole class and masses to organize around. For example, when we raise the demand of Ending Racial Oppression, we must show to soldiers that this oppresses us all, and we should all fight against it.

Both groups of demands (only partial list) must not only be made in the military but also outside it, in mass demonstrations, newspapers etc. Propaganda for these demands can be successful only if they relate to the day to day needs of GI's. In order to do this it is necessary to:

- 1) Have close ties with the military, with conditions of service, with needs and demands of soldiers which can only be acquired by close personal contact with the military.
- 2) Know the system of defence and what the military is doing at the moment.
- 3) Take into consideration the morale of the army and the political situation in the country at a given moment. For example the election of officers, as a rule, can be advanced only when the army has reached an advanced stage of disintegration.
- 4) To link up closely partial demands with the principle slogans of the Anti-Imperialist movement.

These demands will only be revolutionary if they are linked up with a distinct political program for disrupting the Imperialist military and making it impossible for them to effectively smash revolutionary forces.



3333/Work Report Outline

14. Security: Were there relevant security conditions or problems that effected the defense effort? How were they dealt with? What lessons were learned?

15. Resources: Were there specific resource materials that aided the political work being done?

\*\*\*NOTE: These sections should naturally be the very guts of the Work Reports. The politics of the defense, the mass work done and the effects on the organization must be seen as the most important aspect of any real summation of a political defense effort.

This outline was developed by the political defense workshop, held in Milwaukee on Nov. 2-3, 1974.



# HIGHWAY 13



a newspaper by GI's and veterans

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1974

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2

10¢

## HIGHWAY 13 ON POST we have just begun to fight

A 14 year struggle drew to a close last month, when GI's and civilians working with the Military Law Project forced the military to allow personal distribution of Highway 13 on Ft. Meade. About 1500 newspapers were handed to interested GIs, vets and their relatives at the PX and the main commissary Oct. 19th. This was the first time GI's as well as civilians have been permitted to distribute uncensored literature on a U.S. military base.

The struggle began in April of 1973, when we requested the right to hand-out Highway 13 on base. Col. Lance, who was then the base CO, tried to stall by allowing us to set-up vending stands on base. We accepted that offer, but continued to demand our right to distribute the papers on base--a right which had been guaranteed by a Supreme Court decision in 1972.

It became obvious the military would try to stall indefinitely. They spent a for-

tune making up arguments why we were not allowed to hand out the papers on base. At one point, they even cited a law which we discovered had nothing to do with our first amendment rights (as our lawyer said in his reply, "Curiously, that section of the law deals with the procurement of tables & kitchen equipment. I certainly do not see the relevance of this section to this case.")

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



### A Victory For The Miners Is A Victory For Us All

NEWS OF THE MINERS' STRIKE, WHICH BEGAN NOV. 12th, has flooded TV and newspapers. But what does the strike mean for the average soldier?

Well, if you are like most EM in the Army, it probably means you have friends or relatives who are workers or who have been on strike at one time or another. Perhaps you yourself worked in the mines, or a factory, or some other job where you were confronted with a serious decision of whether or not to go on strike.

The miners see the new contract as a way of securing some of what the companies (in collaboration with convicted gangster Tony Boyle, former president of the United Mine Workers Union) have long denied them. In addition to their hefty wage increases and a cost of living clause, they want benefits such as sick leave, higher pensions, (they are now \$150/month for miners who have worked 20 years or more), and increased and improved benefits for retired and disabled miners and widows.

Miners are also demanding the elimination of loopholes forced on them in the present contract concerning rights on the job. For instance, they want job bidding on strict seniority and not on seniority plus ability. They want an end to shift rotation, which the companies have initiated at mines opened in the past few years. And they want the right to refuse to work under unsafe conditions--over 830 men have been killed in the mines since the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act was passed in 1969.

In their letter on the front page, who are the people the miners are talking about when they say "the ownership class?"

Most coal companies are owned by larger corporations. Oil companies own 23% of the current production, and 70% of the known re-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

### PLO Demands Self-Determination

A united front of Third World countries flexed their muscles in support of the Palestinian liberation movement in two international forums in early November, making a shambles of the elaborate Middle East diplomatic web woven by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger over the past year. But the decision by the Arab League to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians, and by the United Nations General Assembly to let a P.L.O. representative address that body, did more than just demonstrate that Kissinger's Middle East "peace" is similar to his "peace" in Vietnam, or his "peace" in Cyprus. Aside from exposing Kissinger as the fool and charlatan that he is, the Arabs, both by their League action and in the United Nations, demonstrated their resourcefulness, and their independence not only of the US, but of the Soviet Union as well. It is now clear that in spite of the massive flow of Russian arms to Egypt and Syria, it is the popularly-based PLO, and not the Kremlin's bosses, who have a decisive influence on Arab policy.

The USSR has in recent years relied on middle-of-the-road, bureaucratic dictatorships like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, to spread its influence in the Arab world. Last spring, Kissinger's jet-diplomacy appeared to have cut the ground out from under the Russians, and to have placed the US in a dominant position in the Arab world. It is now clear that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, in particular, didn't throw out his Russian advisors just in order to end up under the US thumb, but, rather, was playing the two superpowers off against each other, in order to get aid from both. Sadat has no great love for the PLO, since they represent a threat to his leadership of the Arab world. Consequently, he has attempted, over the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# FORD: HE HAS A BETTER IDEA?

The new "Ford team" hasn't been doing so well at home lately, so they went out on the road at the end of November. The object of the trip across the Pacific was to see if the deteriorating overall situation could be patched up by a visit to a fairly representative cross-section of the rulers of countries the government deals with: first, a stop in Tokyo to patch up relations with the most important junior partner in the western capitalist alliance, which has also been on the skids lately; then a short stop-over in Seoul to give South Korea's fascist dictator a little moral support (he's been having some trouble with demonstrations lately); and finally a trip up to Vladivostok, Siberia, for a get-acquainted meeting with the USSR's boss, Brezhnev.

Those last two meetings hadn't happened yet as we went to press, but the visit to

Japan had already been sharply curtailed by massive demonstrations and guerrilla attacks against Ford's presence, showing that it might not have been too smart of Ford to pick Japan as the target of his first overseas foray. As to Ford's smarts, it will be recalled that a colleague in the House of Representatives remarked, at the time of Ford's nomination as Vice President that the nominee was the only man in the house who "couldn't walk and chew gum at the same time." The Japan trip has at least provided further evidence that forward propulsion requires Ford's undivided concentration. As Ford was being led in to be introduced to the Japanese Crown Prince, he walked down a red carpet toward the man, and then walked on right past him, apparently forgetting what he was there for. His divine Majesty, standing near his surprised son, was somewhat taken aback by the strange behavior of the barbarian

chieftain, and let out a shout that disconcerted Ford enough to make further walk impossible. Reaching out in confusion for an assurance, he clutched the hand of the imperial Prince, and the introduction was consummated.



"Really, Bill -- must you always give away the decision of the court before the defense has a chance to plead his case?!"

## A Zionist Defeat & A PLO Victory

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

last few months, to weasel out of supporting the PLO claim to represent all Palestinians.

The issue involves the Arab refugees from Israel who were forced to flee their homes after the 1949 and 1967 wars, and also the Arabs still living in Palestine under Israeli rule. These people, the Palestinians, are the majority of the population in Jordan, and large numbers of them live in Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the Arab world. They also constitute 40% of the population of all the Israeli-ruled territory. By and large, they are peasants, workers, or small shopkeepers, and they resent the rule of both the Israeli big businessmen who use them for cheap labor, and the feudal Jordanian government whose king, Hussein, depends for support on the tribal Bedouins who are the minority in his kingdom. The Israelis insist, however, that all Arabs in both countries are one people, that they already have their state, Jordan, and that they are well represented by their king, Hussein. The only problem remaining, according to the Israeli government, is the ultimate boundary which will separate Jewish Israel from Arab Jordan. They can settle this problem, they say, with Hussein.

The reason the Israelis enjoy this fantasy so much is because they can expect Hussein, who takes orders from Washington, to make a pretty favorable peace with them. Israel is currently in the midst of a serious depression, similar to, but worse than the one she experienced in the mid-'60's. She got out of that one by conquering the parts of Palestine that had remained under Arab control after the 1949 war, and using the cheap Arab labor in those territories to expand her economy. Israel would like to do that again, but military reality makes further conquests impossible. Therefore, the next best thing would be to make peace with

the Arabs under terms that would permit Palestinians to come work in Israel. That would have to mean putting the majority of the Palestinians under the rule of Jordan and the pliable King Hussein.

The PLO, therefore, wanted recognition from the Arab states as the representative of all Palestinians, which would prevent Hussein from being able to negotiate with Israel. Under pressure from his own people, who support the PLO strongly, and eager to show that he isn't eating out of Henry Kissinger's hand, Sadat decided to support the PLO claim. The feudal monarchies of the Arabian peninsula, led by Saudi Arabia, are even less enthusiastic about the PLO than Sadat. But they see the organization as a useful weapon in their fight with the US over oil prices, and they backed the PLO too.

In order to prove that they are willing to settle the Middle East dispute peacefully, although they will use force if they have to, the Palestinians asked to bring their case before the U.N. Neither the U.S., which backs Israel to the hilt, nor the USSR has ever been very happy about the existence of the PLO, since their independence is a threat to the supremacy of the two superpowers. Moscow, however, could not oppose the Palestinian request to address the UN without losing all influence in the Arab world, so it put on a brave face and supported the demand. The U.S. could only muster the votes of two of its most obedient Latin puppets to oppose the move, and the PLO was invited to address the General Assembly.

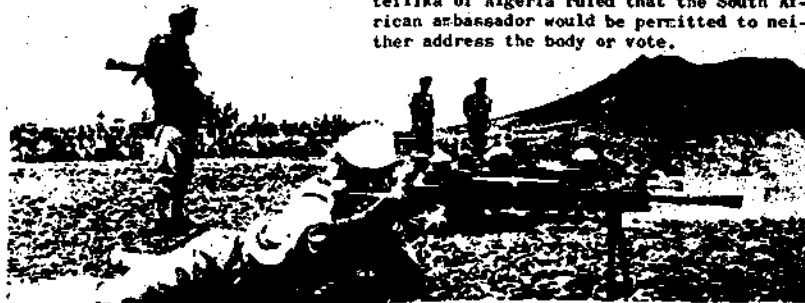
Israel might have been able to muster an additional vote (for all the good that would have done) had South Africa not been barred from participation the day before. A massive majority (again, not including the United States) voted to reject the credentials of the representatives of the all-white Pretoria government on the grounds that it was not a legitimate representative of the five-sixths of its subjects who are non-white. Later, the assembly president Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria ruled that the South African ambassador would be permitted to neither address the body or vote.

Another progressive action likely to be taken as the assembly proceeds with its business is the seating of the Royal Cambodian Government, which controls 90% of Cambodia and is on the verge of occupying the rest, in the place of the US-installed regime which is holding on to the capital (and little else) for dear life. That would, for the first time, put an Indochinese liberation movement office in the territory of the country which attacked Indochina with an army of half a million troops.

Yasir Arafat addressed the UN on Nov 13th, and stressed that peace is possible if the Israelis accept the Palestinians' right to return to their homes and form an independent state. As things stand now, the Israelis may have to resort to force in order to prevent such a solution. That would require force, and, possibly, armed intervention from the U.S.

A recent anti-semitic speech by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force Gen. George Brown, indicates that the Pentagon itself might not be overly eager to get bogged down in another Vietnam in the Middle East. Certainly the average GI isn't. But then the military only does what the country's rulers tell it. That's why Israel recently launched a campaign to drum up US support and to prepare public opinion to accept the possibility of armed intervention. Two former leaders of the Israeli government, who were removed from power last year as scapegoats for the reverses of the October War, are currently making speaking tours of the U.S. In spite of their low standing back home (which may improve if they return with a wad of United Jewish Appeal money and a pledge from Ford that the Marines will be sent in if needed), this worthy pair has managed to maintain the image they cultivated in this country over the years: former defense minister Moshe Dayan is still, in the American mind, the tough, swashbuckling, one-eyed hero of the Six-Day War, while former foreign minister Abba Eban is still the suave and smooth-talking South African-born diplomat who speaks perfect British-accented English. In New York, the two men drew a huge crowd to an anti-PLO rally, but their prospective reception in the rest of the country is uncertain. Demonstrations met Dayan in a heavily Jewish section of Washington, and Eban when he spoke in Towson, Md.

Israel is currently in the midst of such a bad economic crisis that riots have broken out to protest shortages, taxes, and inflation. The Arab armies, on the other hand, are stronger than ever, and the PLO has been gathering increasing support among Palestinians in occupied territory, who have demonstrated and rioted against the Israelis. War may yet be the only way out for the Israeli government. If it comes, it may be up to GIs to see that our armed forces don't get involved.



# MINERS SPEAK OUT

This is a copy of a letter by the recently formed Miner's Committee to Defend the Right to Strike. This letter was sent to many anti-imperialist and revolutionary newspapers across the country for publication.

## TO THE EDITORS:

The Right to Strike Committee is a group of rank-and-file coal miners united to organize and fight for a STRONG CONTRACT which includes the RIGHT-TO-STRIKE written clearly into the grievance procedure.

We have walked off the job over and over to defend our brothers, our rights and our lives. We struck and won Black Lung compensation and sent gas flowing back into the coalfields.

The companies know as well as we do that striking has been our best weapon against their attacks. They have tried to break the wildcats with injunctions, fines against locals and local members and jail sentences. We are not about to bend under their increasing attacks. The wildcats continue—we will not work unsafe, we will not let the companies get away with blatant contract violations. With the power of the right-to-strike we will be in a better position to enforce the contract.

For over a year the coal industry has spent millions of dollars in advertising to mislead the public about the national coal contract. They're saying:

"A miners' strike for a long time will cause urban black-outs and deprive the public of its much-needed energy source during the winter months."

To this we say, during the winter months of 1973 and early 1974, the ownership class caused a major fuel shortage through their promotion of the phony "energy crisis." This energy shortage was not the result of strikes or the misuse of fuel by working people, but the result of world-wide plunder and profiteering by these owners and rulers.

"A miners' strike is against the national interest, especially where the economy is concerned."

To this we say: It wasn't the working class of people who got the country into the present economic crisis. The same class of people that controls interest rates, promotes inflationary military spending to protect their overseas investments, and spreads racism to split the working class is responsible for the rising unemployment, inflation, and the rest of the economic crisis.

"A miners' strike will cause massive layoffs in other industries, particularly steel and auto."

To this we say: The miners want to unite with all workers and other sections of the people to fight back against these attacks on our living standards. In short, it is the ownership class that has laid the basis for massive layoffs. In their search for super-profits, the owners of industry have promoted speed-ups and run-away shops (moving their factories to other areas of the country or to other countries in order to avoid unions, taxes, paying a living wage, etc.) -- only two of the reasons for massive layoffs.

We hope this letter helps clear up some of the lies being put out about the miners' contract struggle and helps build understanding and strengthens the unity of the class. We ask all workers and progressive people to support our struggle.

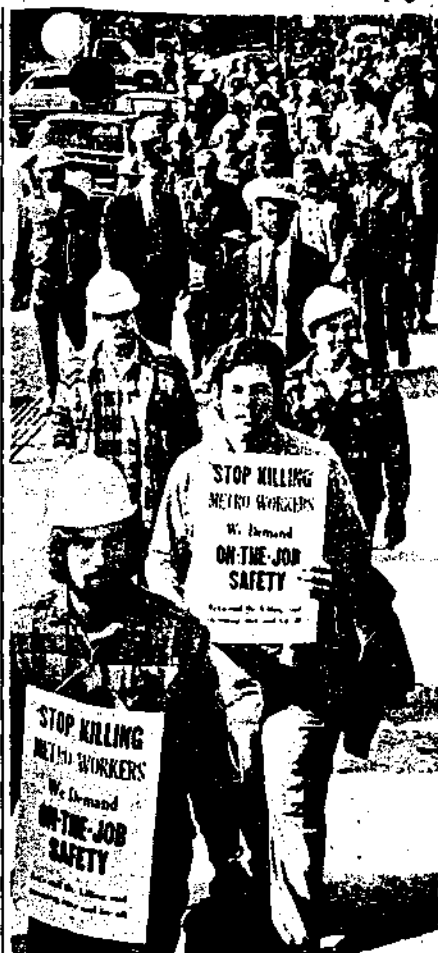
For information or letters of support (contributions are welcome) write:

Miners Committee to Defend the Right to Strike  
PO Box 807  
Beckley, W.Va. 25801

\*\*\*UNITE TO FIGHT\*\*\*

\*\*\*DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE\*\*\*

Yours in Struggle  
The Miners' Committee to Defend  
the Right to Strike



METRO WORKERS (LIKE THE MINERS) WALK OFF THEIR JOBS TO PROTEST UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS. THEIR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT.

tion. You might not be able to go to school and will start work right away... or try to start work. Unemployment among Vietnam vets is double the national average, and among Black vets is twice that. Maybe you have saved up enough to open your own business? Well, don't bet on it. The small businesses are getting smashed faster than anybody else by the ownership class. Try and compete with GM or ITT!

We aren't telling you this because of any kind of moralistic bullshit. We aren't telling you this because the miners are poor and oppressed. But it is time, brothers and sisters, to unite with those who are fighting our very same enemy, the ownership class.

We vets learned in Nam all about this same class, but we learned a different name for it. We saw that we were killing other working and oppressed people for not taking the shit we were forced to take. So we rebelled. The combination of the determination of the Vietnamese people, GIs refusing to fight & die for profit, and the masses of students, workers, and intellectuals in this country and the world who protested our involvement in Vietnam caused this class to retreat. This United Front against the system we now know as imperialism was the main way we were able to defeat this class in the past. This will prove to be our main weapon in the future.

The lines are clearly drawn. Which side are you on?

We ask GIs to refuse to take over the miners' jobs, to refuse to attack the miners on the picket lines, and to refuse to protect the scabs who will be brought in to break the strike.

Also, we need petitions signed to send to the miners to show our support for them. For more information as to how you can help the miners contact Highway 13.

## Which Side Are You On ?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sources of US coal. Utilities and metal and chemical producers control another 32% of current production. But this section of the "ownership class" is only part of what they are talking about.

Every one of us who has worked in the past has been ripped off by this very same class of people. If you worked one day in, say, an auto factory, you would see hundreds of Cadillacs roll off the assembly line. The thing that has changed these scraps of metal into cars is the collective labor added to it by the workers on the line, and the ones who make the parts for them to assemble, and the ones who made the steel to make the parts from, and the miners who dug the coal to melt the steel. All value comes from the workers' labor!!!

The people who make all the profit from our collective labor are the "ownership class." But how do they get away with this shit? Well, one way is that they also control the newspapers, TV, and radio stations. So when we depend on those forms of communication instead of our own eyes and ears we are depending on them (the ownership class) to rat on themselves. And that's not very likely. Look, for example, at the crap they put out about the miners' strike wrecking the country & causing unemployment: it was the coal companies that caused the strike by trying to keep the profits out of the workers' hands, and Bethlehem Steel (which laid

off many workers in Baltimore) is one of the owners of those coal companies.

If we don't fall for these lies, what happens then? Another part of this ownership class are the people who do the actual running of the country, and the passing and enforcing of the laws. This part is the Congress, the courts, police force, and the armed forces. When the people rebel these are the ways they are held down.

GIs are a very important part of this system. When a civil disturbance or strike breaks out, first they use the police, next the National Guard, and finally Federal Troops. THAT'S YOUR!!!

We have seen through the companies' advertisements that they were getting their shit together to organize their forces against the miners' strike even before the strike started. We at Highway 13 see that in order to defend our rights we must organize to fight back with the miners.

"Why? What will I get out of it?" you might ask.

Obviously, most GI's are going to be vets. As a vet you will be subject to similar treatment as GI's... different, but at the same time coming from the same class that oppresses you now in the military. If you become a student, try and go to school without working, too -- even if you get your VA checks on time, they barely cover the tuition.

# Fight Shakedown

Over the last few months, Capt. Malone, FUSASE, has been trying really hard to bust his men for pot. Since August, there have been 3 unannounced shake-downs, and at least one narc was brought in to gather evidence. He was quickly disposed of, however.

As an excuse for the first search, Capt. Malone said that a pistol had been lost in the barracks and he was only looking for that particular weapon and nothing else. However, pot was found in one man's locker, and he was dragged away for questioning by CID. Subsequently, he received a written reprimand for his 201 file. Not exactly fair, huh? Not exactly legal, either. Since the announced intention of the search was finding the pistol, nothing else can legally be seized for evidence. Also, the reprimand is legally "punishment" under the UCMJ. And, punishment can only be given under Art. 15 or court martial for which the man had "benefit" (Army's term) of neither. Needless to say, no pistol was found.

Twelve days later, the men were again roused at 5:00 A.M. This time it was a "health and welfare" inspection. No real reason for the search, just plain old harassment. No drugs were found.

Shortly thereafter, a narc was introduced into the barracks. Within hours of his arrival, he was under suspicion--friends from the First Army Band, in the neighboring barracks had told us of his previous governmental activities. In addition, friends from the 76th Engineers told us that he had been beaten up for his activities there.

With our suspicions confirmed from 2 sources, we confronted him with what we knew. He freaked out, first admitting the facts, (except being a narc--"I'd never do that," he said,) and later, denying everything. Treating him like the informer he is, we lamponed him before everyone, shouting, "Narc!", in the barracks and the mess hall. (Seeking a little shelter from the harassment, he sat down to eat with an MCO. But, even this sergeant, who is personally opposed to all drug use, got up and moved. He couldn't stand associating with this type of scum either.) Within 36 hours, the narc was gone, to Ft. Bragg, we think, no longer useful to Capt. Malone or CID.

In October, another bust was held at 5:00 A.M. Again, no drugs were found. By now, the guys are getting so tired of this that they're beginning to talk about comp time for all the early mornings.

The Army likes to keep us isolated and divided. Enforced on-base living, long, tiring workdays, low pay, short haircuts, duty stations far from home, and hundreds of other things are used by the Army to keep us apart from what it likes to call "the outside world". As an escape from this isolation and the everyday boredom and frustration of military life, many GI's smoke pot.

And, the military is glad they do! First of all, when you're stoned, you don't fight back as hard. The nature of problems becomes less clear and the problems, themselves, seem less and less important the higher you get. Time, which could be spent interviewing witnesses for, and gathering evidence to be presented at, your Art. 15 hearing (they have to give you these rights if you demand them) is often wasted. Secondly, as every GI knows, when you start to resist the military machine, you've got to be careful. Even though your "superiors" are subject to the UCMJ, and you have the right to press charges against them when they violate it, they won't like it when you do. And, they'll be looking for a way to bust you.

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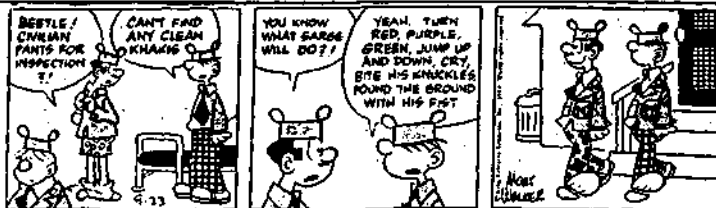
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## Baltimore Newsreel Films

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1/69



# Fight Shakedown

Over the last few months, Capt. Malone, FUSASE, has been trying really hard to bust his men for pot. Since August, there have been 3 unannounced shake-downs, and at least one narc was brought in to gather evidence. He was quickly disposed of, however.

As an excuse for the first search, Capt. Malone said that a pistol had been lost in the barracks and he was only looking for that particular weapon and nothing else. However, pot was found in one man's locker, and he was dragged away for questioning by CID. Subsequently, he received a written reprimand for his 201 file. Not exactly fair, huh? Not exactly legal, either. Since the announced intention of the search was finding the pistol, nothing else can legally be seized for evidence. Also, the reprimand is legally "punishment" under the UCMJ. And, punishment can only be given under Art. 15 or court martial for which the man had "benefit" (Army's term) of neither. Needless to say, no pistol was found.

Twelve days later, the men were again roused at 5:00 A.M. This time it was a "health and welfare" inspection. No real reason for the search, just plain old harassment. No drugs were found.

Shortly thereafter, a narc was introduced into the barracks. Within hours of his arrival, he was under suspicion--friends from the First Army Band, in the neighboring barracks had told us of his previous governmental activities. In addition, friends from the 76th Engineers told us that he had been beaten up for his activities there.

With our suspicions confirmed from 2 sources, we confronted him with what we knew. He freaked out, first admitting the facts, (except being a narc--"I'd never do that," he said,) and later, denying everything. Treating him like the informer he is, we lampooned him before everyone, shouting, "Narc!", in the barracks and the mess hall. (Seeking a little shelter from the harassment, he sat down to eat with an NCO. But, even this sergeant, who is personally opposed to all drug use, got up and moved. He couldn't stand associating with this type of scum either.) Within 36 hours, the narc was gone, to Ft. Bragg, we think, no longer useful to Capt. Malone or CID.

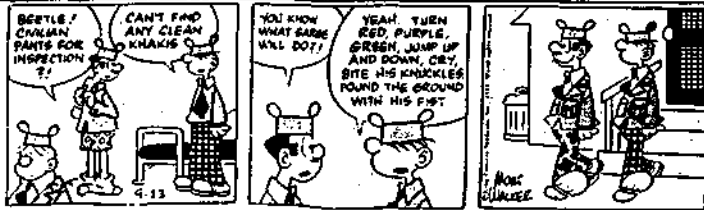
In October, another bust was held at 5:00 A.M. Again, no drugs were found. By now, the guys are getting so tired of this that they're beginning to talk about comp. time for all the early mornings.

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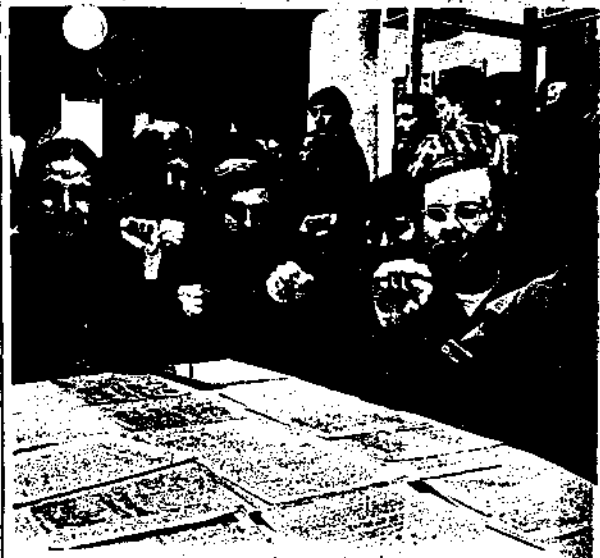
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**CAPT. CRUNCH**



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I remember two examples well. With performance records having been reviewed, two candidates for promotion received differing verdicts from the board based on petty information. One person had been reported for taking enlisted friends into the Officers Club, getting drunk, and then passing into a coffee pot. The other person had a tattoo of a cherry on his thigh, which also read "Here's mine, where's yours?". This was received with a round of laughter and applause by the board members. The cherry tattoo was promoted, the pot-pisser rejected.



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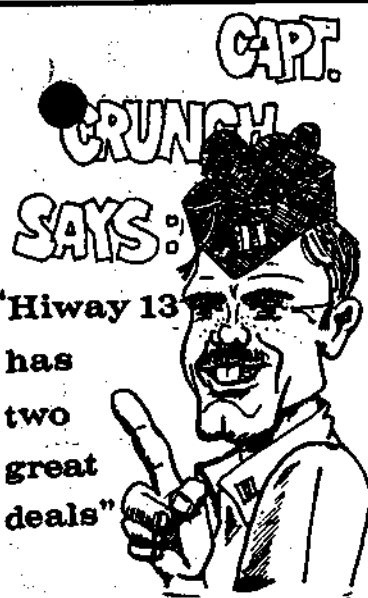
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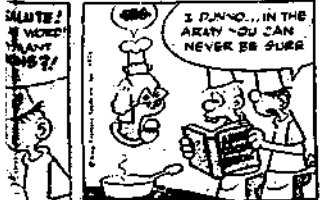
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# VETS DAY RALLY HITS VA

On Veterans Day, Monday October 28, 50 veterans and supporters held a militant anti-imperialist demonstration at a local office of the Veterans Administration in Northeast Washington, D.C. The demonstration had been called by the D.C., Md., Va. Region of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization (VVAW/WSO) to announce the beginning of their campaign "WAR ON THE V.A."

The demonstrators, including active-duty GIs from Highway 13, met at 12 noon at 13th and I St. N.E. From there, they began a militant march to the V.A. down H St N.E., a major Black shopping street. As the marchers chanted slogans putting forward the four demands of the demo, people on the street and in stores displayed signs of support and curiosity. The four demands were: Universal Unconditional Amnesty for all war resisters, Implementation of the 1973 Paris Peace Agreements and the Ending of All Aid to Thieu & Lon Nol, a Single-type Discharge for All Vets, and Decent Benefits for All Vets.



The police tried to prevent the 50 demonstrators from marching in the street, because the police thought they were too weak. But the demonstrators stood firm, displayed their united strength and the police were forced to back off. When the demonstrators arrived along-side a Safeway grocery store, they changed their militant chants about the four demands to show solidarity with the struggling farmworkers. The marchers stopped in front of Safeway, and despite police attempts to stop them, they remained there for fifteen minutes of militant chanting: "Boycott Lettuce, Boycott Grapes, Boycott Everything that Gallo Makes." When the marchers were ready they moved on to their main objective: the V.A.

When they arrived at the V.A. the spirit and militancy of the chants even

increased, thus clearly showing their disgust with that repressive imperialist institution. After about fifteen minutes of militant chanting the people stopped to listen to five speakers.

The first speaker was Jim Nyson, a Vietnam veteran with a less-than-honorable discharge. Jim spoke in support of the demand for Universal Unconditional Amnesty, and how it directly affected him and the other 960,000 veterans with less-than-honorable discharges. He was followed by Ray Henderson, a Marine veteran of Vietnam, and a member of the African Liberation Support Committee. Ray talked of the need to support other liberation struggles and how veterans should fight back and expose the V.A. for what it is. Then Tim Rutz from VVAW/WSO talked about repression in this country and specifically about the racist frame-ups of Gary Lawton, the Leavenworth Brothers, Indians who struggled against repression at Wounded Knee and police attacks against VVAW/WSO and others who continue to struggle against this imperialist system.

He was followed by Steve Bruns, an active-duty GI and member of Highway 13.

Steve talked about the need for GIs and veterans to unite together around such demands as a Single-type Discharge for All. He was followed by Terry Seizer of VVAW/WSO who spoke about the campaign "War On The V.A." which this demonstration kicked off.

Following the speeches the 50 veterans, GIs, and supporters took out their discharges and the discharges of some 200 veterans who were unable to come to the demo because of conflicts with work and school (The V.A. on the other hand was closed, not that it serves the interest of vets when it is open) and to a militant chant calling for a Single-type Discharge burned the bad papers of a multiple discharge system. This clearly showed to the V.A. and the military that GIs and vets will no longer put up with a racist and repressive discharge system that punishes them for life.

The demonstration concluded with the people marching away, after notifying the V.A. that they would be back again and again until they obtained their demands, to the militant chant that

**"THE PEOPLE UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED"**

## exile...

A war resister who went into exile rather than fight in the immoral, unjust Vietnam war spoke at the University of Maryland, College Park, Md. on November 19, 1974. Steve Grossman is originally from Chicago, Illinois but for the last two years he has been living in Canada as a draft resister.

Steve's purpose in coming back to the States is to explain the exiles', and other war resisters' boycott of President Ford's "earned re-entry program." Under this law an individual who reenters the US has 14 days to turn himself in to the authorities. Steve is using his 14 days to travel and speak at 11 cities. The speeches deal with the need for universal unconditional amnesty. Once a resister turns himself in he is required to sign a statement of

allegiance and he agrees to perform 2 years of public service

It was explained that less than 100 of more than 25,000 draft resisters have come back to the US under Ford's plan since they have done nothing wrong and certainly should not be punished. Steve pointed out that US imperialism was the reason people were sent to fight the war in Vietnam and he stated that imperialism is wrong. Steve explained that draft resisters are not the only people who should receive universal and unconditional amnesty since there are 580,000 veterans in this country with less than honorable discharges who should get the same type of amnesty (a single type discharge).

Steve summed up his speech by saying "The right for unconditional amnesty is not only for us, for our generation, but for our children, a right for future generations to refuse to participate in wars they feel are unjust."

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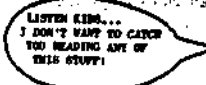


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Whew! It wasn't exactly the "freedom of speech" you read about in high school civics class, but at least the government proposal did allow some hand-to-hand distribution at the fort. After long debate, we decided we would abide by the proposal for the time being, even though we couldn't accept it as the final settlement.

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Since then, we have distributed about a half-dozen times on base, at the PX, the commissary, the base theaters, and at the Ray Charles concert on base. The response has been enthusiastic -- most folks are glad to take a copy of HIGHWAY 13, and many make contributions (the first day we collected \$8, which sure helps us put this thing out). We've also gotten into some great raps, and we've folks have learned about Highway 13 and the Military Law Project.

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# VETS DAY RALLY HITS VA

On Veterans Day, Monday October 28, 50 veterans and supporters held a militant anti-imperialist demonstration at a local office of the Veterans Administration in Northeast Washington, D.C. The demonstration had been called by the D.C., Md., Va. Region of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization (VVAW/WSO) to announce the beginning of their campaign "WAR ON THE V.A."

The demonstrators, including active-duty GIs from Highway 13, met at 12 noon at 13th and I St. N.E. From there, they began a militant march to the V.A. down H St N.E., a major Black shopping street. As the marchers chanted slogans putting forward the four demands of the demo, people on the street and in stores displayed signs of support and curiosity. The four demands were: Universal Unconditional Amnesty for all war resisters, Implementation of the 1973 Paris Peace Agreements and the Ending of All Aid to Thieu & Lon Nol, a Single-type Discharge for All Vets, and Decent Benefits for All Vets.



The police tried to prevent the 50 demonstrators from marching in the street, because the police thought they were too weak. But the demonstrators stood firm, displayed their united strength and the police were forced to back off. When the demonstrators arrived along-side a Safeway grocery store, they changed their militant chants about the four demands to show solidarity with the struggling farmworkers. The marchers stopped in front of Safeway, and despite police attempts to stop them, they remained there for fifteen minutes of militant chanting: "Boycott Lettuce, Boycott Grapes, Boycott Everything that Gallo Makes." When the marchers were ready they moved on to their main objective: the V.A.

When they arrived at the V.A. the spirit and militancy of the chants even

increased, thus clearly showing their disgust with that repressive imperialist institution. After about fifteen minutes of militant chanting the people stopped to listen to five speakers.

The first speaker was Jim Tyson, a Vietnam veteran with a less-than-honorable discharge. Jim spoke in support of the demand for Universal Unconditional Amnesty, and how it directly affected him and the other 980,000 veterans with less-than-honorable discharges. He was followed by Ray Henderson, a Marine veteran of Vietnam, and a member of the African Liberation Support Committee. Ray talked of the need to support other liberation struggles and how veterans should fight back and expose the V.A. for what it is. Then Tim Nutz from VVAW/WSO talked about repression in this country and specifically about the racist frame-ups of Gary Lawton, the Leavenworth Brothers, Indians who struggled against repression at Wounded Knee and police attacks against VVAW/WSO and others who continue to struggle against this imperialist system.

He was followed by Steve Bruns, an active-duty GI and member of Highway

13. Steve talked about the need for GIs and veterans to unite together around such demands as a Single-type Discharge for All. He was followed by Terry Selzer of VVAW/WSO who spoke about the campaign "War On The V.A." which this demonstration kicked off.

Following the speeches the 50 veterans, GIs, and supporters took out their discharges and the discharges of some 200 veterans who were unable to come to the demo because of conflicts with work and school (The V.A. on the other hand was closed, not that it serves the interest of vets when it is open) and to a militant chant calling for a Single-type Discharge burned the bad papers of a multiple discharge system. This clearly showed to the V.A. and the military that GIs and vets will no longer put up with a racist and repressive discharge system that punishes them for life.

The demonstration concluded with the people marching away, after notifying the V.A. that they would be back again and again until they obtained their demands, to the militant chant that

**'THE PEOPLE UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED'**

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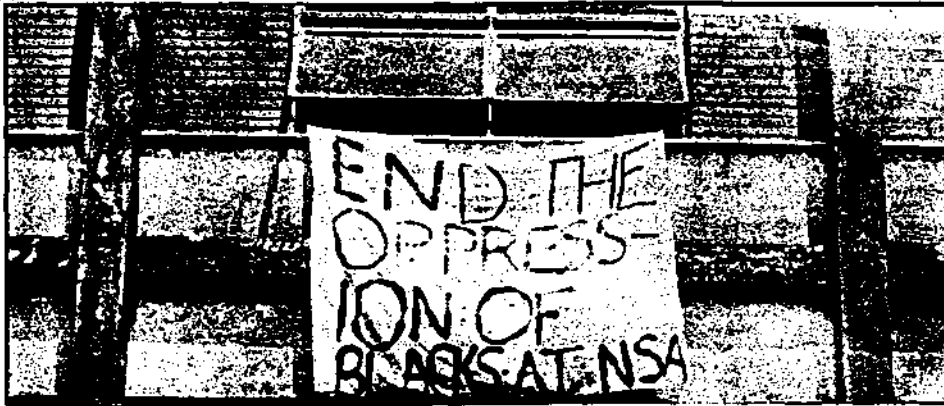
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# Navy Racism Intensifies USS LITTLE ROCK CASE



Little Rock Brothers display banner outside the window of barracks in Naples, Italy, where they had just beaten back a Marine riot squad.

(Naples, Italy - Oct 2, 1974) After waiting almost a year to go to trial, one Puerto Rican and nine Black sailors from the USS LITTLE ROCK rebellion, along with two others, have been forced into yet another confrontation with the racist Navy brass, and are now facing additional serious court-martial charges. The first pretrial sessions began in Naples on Oct. 2nd on the charges stemming from the November '73 incident aboard the LITTLE ROCK and the July 25, 1974 attack by Marines on the Little Rock brothers.

The first charges of riot and assault aboard the LITTLE ROCK occurred during the Middle East war last November while cruising in the Mediterranean. The incident stemmed from four months of racial harassment, culminating with fights when a white sailor attacked a Black sailor with a wrench. Only the Blacks were charged, and they have since been on transient status at a small base in Italy while the Court of Military Appeals in Washington, DC decided a pretrial motion made by their lawyer.

On July 25th, an all-out battle erupted at the Naval Support Activity (NSA) base in Naples when thirty armed Marines charged into the Navy barracks in a pre-dawn action designed to drag two of the Little Rock Brothers off to pretrial confinement in Rota, Spain. This decision to jail Donald Brookins and Edilberto Felix resulted from the Navy's overreaction to a minor incident several days before.

Fearing resistance and solidarity from the Third World sailors, the brass carefully devised a scheme to separate

Brookins and Felix from the others and fly them to the Navy brig in Spain. The plan was foiled when the plane's schedule was changed, but instead of scrapping the plan, the brass had all the Little Rock Brothers awakened at 5:30 in the morning under the guise of a drug inspection. While the others were assembled in the recreation room of the barracks, Brookins and Felix were singled

Felix were spirited out to the Master at Arms room and told to pack for jail.

The other Little Rock sailors and several friends got wind of what was happening and demanded that their lawyer in Germany be called or that they all be taken to the brig. In a rage, the Commanding Officer of the base ordered all force necessary be used to accomplish the transfer of the two. The Marine riot squad was ordered in, but the Brothers stood their ground.

When the Black Marines on the riot force realized the situation and what they were being used for, they refused to raise their nightsticks against their brothers (and were later punished for their refusal). The rest, however, began clubbing the sailors, who by then had barricaded Brookins and Felix in a room and locked arms in resistance outside. Though they were outnumbered more than three to one by the Marines—several of whom were brandishing .45's—the Little Rock sailors easily overwhelmed their opponents, took their nightsticks away and forced a retreat. They later hung a sign out the window of the barracks which said: END THE OPPRESSION OF BLACKS AT NSA. The sign was visible to the whole base.

ough negotiations eventually resolved the conflict and the resisters won their demands: (1) to be allowed to talk with their lawyer, and (2) that Brookins and Felix not be sent to the brig—the sailors are now charged with resisting arrest, assaulting the Marines, and taking a hostage. (The so-called hostage was a close friend of many of the Brothers who wandered into the "liberated" section of the barracks during the July 25th incident). There is little chance that the so-called hostage, who has since been discharged, will testify against the brothers, but he was threatened with prosecution himself by Naval Investigative Service (NIS) if he didn't.

The pretrial sessions which began on October 2nd followed a six-month delay during which the Court of Military Appeals (COMA) in Washington, DC had adjourned the trials to decide whether Captain Cullins, CO of the LITTLE ROCK, had illegally convened the courts since he was the accuser, being a participant in last November's events. The defense won that decision and all of the original charges were thrown out. When the Little Rock charges, plus the one arising out of the July 25th incidents, were sent to a new Convening Authority, he dropped eight of the ten riot charges and a few other minor ones, but sent all the rest to new courts. The ten original Little Rock defendants and two other Black sailors stationed at NSA (who supported them during the July 25th incident) are now all on trial.

As new incidents of racism towards the men arise nearly every day, new charges against them are constantly being added. Their attorney, Bill Schaap of the Lawyers Military Defense Committee, is hopeful of making pretrial settlements. The importance of making settlements of the cases is that it is clear that the defendants could never get a fair trial or jury anywhere in the Navy, especially in the Mediterranean area where there is not a single Black Navy officer.

The racism directed against the Little Rock Brothers is an example of the racism throughout the Navy and the whole US military. The struggle against racism must not, however, be looked at as a struggle of only Third World people. The struggle against racism is as much the concern of white people as it is Third World people because in the final analysis we will be able to end racial oppression, military oppression and all other forms of oppression only when both white and Third World people are united. As long as the brass is able to effectively use racism to divide enlisted people and as long as they are able to perpetuate chauvinistic and racist attitudes among white GIs, they will be successful in preventing GIs from getting together to fight back against the brass and the whole system of imperialism. Racism is one of the cornerstones of imperialism and will only be thoroughly eliminated when the whole system of imperialism is defeated.

(reprinted from GI NEWS).

Well, they've done it again! Just like they do every year about this time of merriment and joy, gifts and goodwill.

My husband is an E-4, and recently our most generous government has conceded to give all the men a raise in pay. Naturally, this pay raise goes through one of our most inefficient depts., Army Finance. Suddenly, my husband becomes an E-3, with-out a pay raise, through no fault of his own. It seems that somebody in finance doesn't know the difference between a 3, and a 4. And, accordingly, my husband received a pay-check minus approximately \$40.00.

Well, I realize that it must be very hard for some people to tell the difference between a 3, and a 4, and, therefore, mistakes are made. But, the thing that bothers me the most, is that no matter how many forms are made out, they will continue to take out money for the next

## OLIVE DRAB BLUES



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So, here I am, stuck without the extra money that the Christmas spirit requires of all us well-meaning people. But, just try telling that to all your friends and relatives on the outside who have people and organizations to defend them whenever an error in their pay arises.

How am I going to feel when I give gifts from the 5 and 10, and my relations give me gifts from Macy's? But, being in the Christmas spirit, I wish joy and happiness to everyone, yes, even the finance dept. of PGM. And, by the way, what ever happened to the \$20.00 you accidentally took out of our pay two years ago?

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# WHAT IS THE MLP?

Since January of 1973, a group of vets, GIs, and civilians have been working around the Baltimore-DC area to help people in the military. They call themselves the MILITARY LAW PROJECT (MLP) and presently have offices at 108 Washington Blvd., just across from the Greyhound Bus Station (see the map).

Although the MLP and Highway 13 are separate organizations, we cooperate in our work--Highway 13 uses the MLP office for laying-out the newspaper, and in turn publicizes the MLP services.

The Military Law Project is funded largely by the American Friends Service Committee, a national social change organization founded by American Quakers. The MLP offers free counseling and advice about legal and military hassles. It also sponsors many films, discussion groups, and speakers and has a large selection of books. Members of the MLP have general meetings on Wednesday evenings, and usually their office is open weekday evenings & Saturday mornings.

We encourage you to call them at: 792-0915 or 366-7200, or stop by the MLP office.

The MLP submitted the following article, explaining their work:

We are here to help GIs, WACs, veterans and their families overcome the problems they face because of the military. Much of our energy goes into free, legal counseling about discharges, courts-martial, Art. 15's, vets benefits, and complaints against superiors. We explain the different regulations or laws about a problem, discuss possible solutions, and help the people we counsel follow through on the option they choose. We can also refer people to civilian doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers, and Congressional people.

Helping individuals solve their personal problems is important, but it is not enough. We know that many people are forced into the military because they can find no other job or because they are threatened with a jail sentence; many others are tricked in by recruiters' lies about training or assignments.



GIs, vets & civilians join a picket line sponsored by the MLP at the Giant grocery store in Laurel to support striking farmworkers. The MLP helps publicize many demonstrations, rallies, and speakers, and often shows films and hosts pot-luck dinners at the office at 108 Washington Blvd, in Laurel, MD.

And all of these people share some common problems: they are harassed about political beliefs, or haircuts, or clothing; if they are members of national minorities or if they are women, they are often discriminated against in assignments and training; they are constantly threatened with punishment under

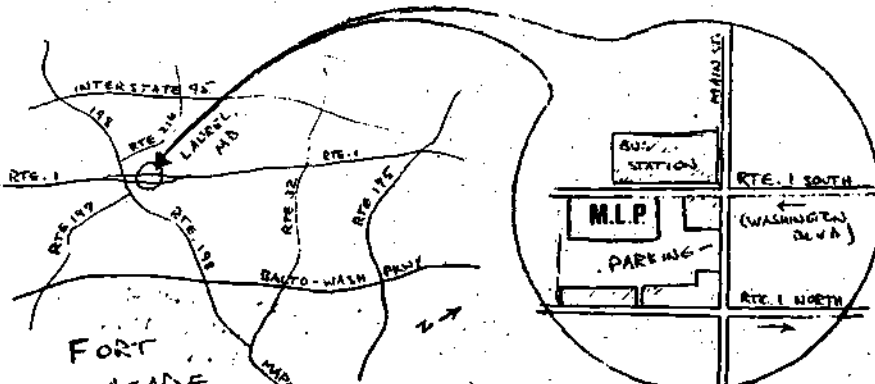
the UCMJ, which denies many of the democratic rights other citizens have come to expect.

These problems of racism and sexism and legal oppression don't mean the military isn't working the way it was meant to -- instead, the military is operating just the way it was designed to, and these different "problems" are used by the brass to keep people divided so they will continue to do the dull, underpaid, and sometimes dangerous work (like getting killed on the other side of the world) that the Army needs.

No simple reforms will correct these problems. The only solution is to join together to struggle for justice. The MLP helps by supporting military resisters and GI organizers by giving them advice based on experience, helping with publicity, supporting rallies & demonstrations for fair treatment of military personnel and vets, and by providing a place where people can gather safely to talk about combatting this oppression.

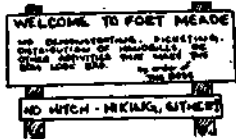
Finally, we know that the military makes an attempt to cut-off its personnel from points of view that don't agree with the government line. We work to overcome that by providing books & pamphlets, films, speakers, demonstrations, and discussion groups that show other viewpoints more in the peoples' interest. And especially we educate people about the role of the U.S. military -- how it's used to keep the U.S. the richest country in the world by ripping off the other nations (with 6% of the world's population, America consumes 50% of the planet's resources), and how GIs are often used as riot cops or to put down strikes by workers (like the Postal strike of 1970, where National Guardsmen were forced to scab against civilian workers).

Through our work, we will build a society where people are treated justly, where opportunities and advantages are shared, where people feel responsible for correcting the problems their brothers & sisters face. We hope you will join us in this important work.



**Military Law Project**  
**108 Washington Blvd.**  
**792-0915 or 366-7200**

Our office is on the second floor, above a bookstore. The door is at the back of the building, by the gravel parking lot.



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR/  
 WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION

## JOIN VVAW/WSO NOW!!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN VVAW/WSO

I AM AN ACTIVE-DUTY GI

I AM CURRENTLY IN PRISON

I AM ENCLOSING \$ \_\_\_\_\_ TO SUPPORT YOUR GROUP

I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION

MARYLAND/WASHINGTON DC/VIRGINIA  
 521 B SECOND ST., NE  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20002  
 (202) 543-0817

mailing address:  
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 Baltimore, MD 21218  
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A SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR SUMMING UP WORK REPORTS OF POLITICAL  
DEFENSE EFFORTS\*\*\*\*\*

Towards the goal of learning from our own practice with political defense efforts and summing up the lessons for future VVAW/WSO defense work, it is vitally important that we have accurate and relevant work reports analyzing each case we work on. The section on Work Reports (VI) in the VVAW/WSO Political Defense Manual is one way we can consistently see that this is accomplished. After each defense effort is over, or while it is still going on if necessary, VVAW/WSO defense committee members should sum up their work on the defense and submit it to the NO for inclusion in the Manual.

The Work Reports for Section VI in the Manual are not meant to be just blow-by-blow descriptive histories of what happened and when. Rather they should be written as an overall political summation of the organization's practice working on the case. The essence of these reports is to try and cull out the general political lessons and experience---what mistakes were made, what was done right, etc.--- of the defense effort so that other VVAW/WSO political defense committees can benefit from the experience and practice gained in the future. They are not to be seen as articles or histories of the case to be read by the general public but are to be written for, and read by, VVAW/WSO organizers preparing to actually do political defense work.

Towards this end, the following is seen as a useful outline to guide the preparation of these work reports. If these general questions can be answered adequately, future VVAW/WSO organizers should have a much clearer POLITICAL understanding of how the work on a given VVAW/WSO political defense effort was conducted and how it may or may not relate to them. Naturally, only those questions relevant to a given case should be dealt with; in some instances it may be all of the questions and in others it may only be some of them.

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1. Basic history of the case: What were the specifics of the case, the general factors involved? What was particular to this case as opposed to other political defense efforts? What was the general political situation surrounding the case?

2. Leadership: What were the principles of leadership followed in the case? Who had the authority to make basic decisions on the political conduct of the defense effort? What was VVAW/WSO's relationship to the leadership structure. How well did this work or not work?

3. Selection criteria: What criteria were followed in making VVAW/WSO's decision to work on the case?

A. Was it an organizational defense? If so, how was a determination of the level of organizational response made?

B. Was it a coalitional defense? How did it function? What was our organizational relationship to the coalition?

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4. Lawyers & court system: What was VVAW/WSO's relationship in the defense effort to lawyers and the legal system? How satisfactory was our relationship with defense attorneys? What could we have done to improve it? Did defense committee members help with legal work? If so what type? Did this conflict with the primary political tasks of mass outreach?

5. Defense committee organization: How was the defense committee organized? What was its structure? Was it a coalition of groups, a few people with an outside support committee which gave support but was not involved in decision making--what? Was membership limited or open? Were there enough people on the committee; too many?

A. What was the relationship with the defendant(s)? Was political direction taken from the defendant? Was there real connection between the defense committee and the defendant? Did the defendant have veto power? If so, over what?

B. What tasks were seen as necessary for the defense committee? Which could have been done by a support committee?

C. How did the defense committee decision making process work?

\*\*\*6. Politics of defense: What were the politics of the overall defense effort? What political point was trying to be made through the defense that would further expose the state to the people? How did, or did not, the defense effort strike a blow at the state?

\*\*\*7. Mass work: How were the masses involved in the defense effort? Was this done effectively as possible under the circumstances? How could it have been done better? Was the defense's primary orientation aimed at mobilizing mass support?

\*\*\*8. Effect on VVAW/WSO: How did the defense effort effect VVAW/WSO? Was it a positive or negative thing? Was the organization built as a result? If so, how?

9. Propaganda: How was propaganda for the defense conducted? What methods were utilized? What seemed to be the most effective? What mistakes were made? What lessons were learned?

10. Fundraising: What were the specifics of fundraising vis-a-vis the defense effort? How did it effect the political work being done? How could it have been done better? What lessons were learned?

11. Internal political education: Did the defense committee do internal political education? Did it help the political work being done? How could it have been made more effective?

12. Special defense effort: Was the defense a special defense effort? (In a military court, a defense of prisoners, a grand jury, etc.) How did this effect the work being done by VVAW/WSO?

13. Jury selection: How did the jury selection process effect the political work being done? How could it have been done more effectively? What lessons were learned?