

VVAW-WSO National Meeting

MEETING SETS NEW PROGRAM



Buffalo Vets Day Demo

From December 27-31, 1974, VVAW/WSO held its fourteenth National Steering Committee Meeting (NSCM) in St. Louis, Missouri. Delegates from nearly every region of the country met to discuss and determine national policies and programs for the organization. The National Steering Committee is the highest decision-making body of VVAW/WSO, which meets every six months. It is composed of 8 delegates from each region who are elected by the members of that region to represent them.

The beginning of the meeting was spent with analyzing the strengths, weaknesses and direction of the organization. Each region spoke to the concrete conditions in their areas, summing up work and the successes of building the struggle in their communities. This was followed by workshops which met to discuss specific areas of work and political questions facing the organization. The reports from these workshops served as the basis for the whole body to then discuss and vote on what the national organization must do in the coming period.

This national meeting was of great importance -- both to VVAW/WSO and the anti-imperialist movement. The organization decided that our responsibility to the growing struggle against imperialism is for us to build a fighting veteran and GI movement -- a movement which will be integrally involved in insuring that U. S. imperialism is wiped from the face of the earth. We also discussed such major questions as

the continued war in Indochina, the rising danger of war in the Middle East, the struggle for universal and unconditional amnesty, the current economic crisis, conditions facing GIs and veterans, and the development of a national program of work for the organization.

National Program

The best way VVAW/WSO can fight the oppression coming down on veterans and organize these people into the struggle against imperialism is for us to wage a national campaign around the conditions that veterans face -- a campaign to attack the entire Veterans Administration system. The system we live under, U. S. imperialism, is in deep crisis. After decades of trying to seize the resources and cheap labor of Third World nations, imperialism is being thrown out of these countries, defeated by liberation struggles around the world and the resistance of the American people here at home. Since one of the major sources of profits for big business is being cut off, as a result of the victories of the many liberation struggles, the imperialists are having to turn more and more to the poor and working people here in the U. S. to dump their crisis on. That is what the current economic situation is all about -- inflation, recession and unemployment for the masses of people and profits for the scum at the top.

Veterans are also facing the rising attacks on people's living standards. Unemployment is much higher for Vietnam-era vets than the national average, particularly for minority veterans. The GI Bill is 300% lower than it was for WWII vets. The quality of medical care at VA hospitals is deteriorating, and staff is being cutback. Anyone who has been to the VA for help knows that the VA tries to obstruct or flatly deny these benefits.

Veterans were tricked and forced into fighting a war of aggression which was not in their interests, and they have returned to a society which is unwilling and unable to meet their day-to-day needs. Why? Because the VA is part of the whole system, the imper-

ialist system, and that system is run in the interests of the small class who control everything. The VA is not answerable to the masses of veterans, does not have to account for its actions to vets and generally is used to beat vets down, to "pacify" them and try to keep them from fighting back against the system.

But vets are fighting back and they are fighting mad! Because of this, VVAW/WSO has declared war on the entire VA system -- the hospitals, the administrative offices, the drug programs, the job training programs, the GI Bill, the vet reps on campuses, the community vets programs, the federally funded rip-off programs and the poverty pimps who leach off the people's real problems and try to divert the struggle. The only way that vets, and all people, will get what is rightfully theirs is if they fight for it. Through our campaign against the VA, VVAW/WSO hopes to lead the struggle of veterans and build that fighting movement of vets which will be able to deliver a powerful blow in the struggle for freedom in this country.

One of the prime targets of our program is the VA hospital system. This system, the largest of all hospital systems in the country is also one of the worst run. The doctor/patient ratio is lower than most county general hospitals. The red tape, racial discrimination, regimentation and harassment "greet" vets as they walk through VA doors and shows the inability of VA hospitals to really serve the needs of the millions of veterans who are forced to seek help from the VA. We are organizing in these hospitals, going to patients and helping them to fight back. We are working with the hospital employees, the majority of whom really care about the problems of veterans, and supporting their struggle against the staff cutbacks which are currently plaguing the VA system and to help in the fight to see that needed programs in the VA are implemented.

Along with our campaign being waged against the VA, VVAW/WSO also adopted a national program of work for building the anti-imperialist GI movement. For years, GIs have been fighting back against the repression, racism and role of the military; VVAW/WSO will more consciously take up these struggles in a systematic way and increase our organizing among active-duty people. We believe that the military does not serve the interests of GIs, nor the majority of American people; instead, it is used to protect the interests of U. S. imperialism -- both at home and abroad. Our program for GI work is a tool to help GIs organize against the conditions they face in the military and line that struggle up

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Vets Day in Milwaukee

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with the struggles of veterans and all other working and oppressed people to defeat this bankrupt system we live under.

VVAW/WSO also plans to continue its fight for universal, unconditional amnesty for all war resisters. That fight includes the 580,000 vets with less-than-honorable discharges, the



Tacoma VVAW/WSO on Vets Day

thousands of people living underground here in the U.S. the people in prison and those who have received criminal records as a result of resistance to the war, and those currently in exile abroad.

On top of this, VVAW/WSO continues our effort to see that the continued war in Indochina is ended once and for all, supporting the Indochinese people in their fight for self-determination, freedom and independence. This struggle did not end with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords as the U.S. continues to pour billions of dollars into Southeast Asia in support of dictators like Lon Nol of Cambodia and Thieu of South Vietnam. The fight of the Indochinese people is our fight, the fight of veterans and non-veterans alike, and our support for their struggle will continue until the people of Indochina are allowed to control their own destinies.

Finally, the National Steering Committee of VVAW/WSO voted to add a new national slogan to our program -- JOBS OR INCOME FOR ALL! -- to speak to the current economic crisis in the U.S. We raise all of our demands in the spirit of seeing an end to the system of oppression and exploitation which currently governs us -- U.S. imperialism. We look forward to years of growth and of struggle, and finally, to the day when that system which oppresses us will be smashed once and for all.

- * UNIVERSAL, UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY FOR ALL WAR RESISTERS!
- * IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT -- END ALL AID TO THIEU AND LON NOL!
- * DECENT BENEFITS FOR ALL VETS!
- * SINGLE-TYPE DISCHARGE FOR ALL VETS!
- * JOBS OR INCOMD FOR ALL!

WINTER SOLDIER