

INTERNAL REPORT

During the past four months, three major conferences were held that were of great importance to VVAW/WSO: the Exile Conference held in Toronto, Canada, the National GI Conference held in Chicago, Illinois and the NCUUA Amnesty Conference held in Louisville, Kentucky. Each was of a different character and resulted in a greater knowledge for the organization as a whole. Our relations with the exile groups has never been better. We have come to know many members of AMEX Magazine and have been in a lot more contact with them over the past few months. The exile conference gave us a chance to meet with members of organizations other than from Toronto. We have made new contacts with the Vancouver American Exiles Association, the American Deserters Committee in Sweden, DRO in France and have met again with a member of our London chapter and the Union of American Exiles in Britain.

We find that the exile groups think very highly of the work that we have been doing. They talked about the need for us to constantly raise the issue of the less than honorably discharged veterans as a major part of our amnesty work.

The GI conference held in Chicago was an important step in building new unity in the movement. While there was much debate at the conference, the clarity of positions moved the struggle forward and clearly gave VVAW/WSO GI chapters a better sense of the differences in organizing GIs that exists in the country.

The amnesty conference in Louisville, organized by the NCUUA and the Louisville People for Amnesty was a success also. It gave VVAW/WSO the opportunity to meet with many representatives from various organizations around the country. It showed that NCUUA is more than just an office in New York, but truly a national network of organizations working for a universal and unconditional amnesty, and as such showed us that we have a lot of work to do in order to put forward our anti-imperialist views. (This is more detailed in the amnesty section of this report.) This amnesty conference was a major development in the amnesty movement.

We have seen the emergence of many coalitions and committees formed around particular repression cases. Chapters across the country have joined them or work closely with them. We think that this is a good thing. Support for the Attica Brothers, Antwony Cayley, Mendoza, the Leaverworth Brothers, Tyrone Guyton, etc. shows that the organization has begun to seriously take up the struggles of political prisoners and repression cases in a national way. This work is being done in coalitions and committees, linking VVAW/WSO with other progressive organizations in the fight against repression. We think that this type of work will be done more and more as conditions in the imperialist system worsen.

*ANTWONY CAYLEY*  
*File*

As part of the fight against repression, the case of Gary Lawton has begun to generate international support. Organizations from Japan, Guyana, Germany and Canada have sent telegrams of support to Gary. Recently, we have embarked on a campaign to intensify support both nationally and internationally. We think chapters that work in these coalitions should raise the repression of Gary with banners or signs and leaflets at anti-repression picket lines.

Internationally we continue to make new contacts and establish new relations with a variety of organizations. We have received New Years cards from the Vietnamese and the Cambodians and we have sent telegrams of support to a series of international organizations supporting demonstrations held in Germany, Italy and England. Due to financial consider

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ns, we could not attend the Anti-NATO conference held recently in Holland, but representatives of our London Chapter attended for us. In addition to establishing a London Chapter a year ago, the GI organization Liberated Barracks in Hawaii has officially joined VVAW/WSO recently.

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Our support for liberation struggles has continued also. In addition to supporting the struggles of the Indochinese, we have co-sponsored the Puerto Rican Independence rally held in New York City in October. Members of the NYC chapter were part of a group welcoming the newly formed coalition government in Laos, and presented them with WINNER SOLDIER and VVAW/WSO buttons.

While VVAW/WSO continues to develop in its relations with other organizations there is however, one aspect of our external work that is of major importance to not only this organization, but the entire mass movement as well. This is the situation that has developed between VVAW/WSO and the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. Recently, in response to Gary Lawton's letter to Angela Davis, the NAARPR published an open letter to VVAW/WSO chapters. This letter was an outright attack on us and was done in a devious, opportunist fashion. The issue is developing to be larger than one letter from Lawton to Davis. What is at issue is whether or not the Alliance, in its present form, is serving the interests of political prisoners. We say it is not. Davis is a leading figure in the Alliance and a leading member of the CPUSA. The political line being put forward by the CPUSA and the Alliance is reformist and opportunist. We believe that their letter to us is typical of that political outlook. We feel that this should be discussed in the Alliance Workshop and when presented with the facts of the situation, we believe that the delegates to the NSCM will vote to censure the Alliance for its work around political prisoners and its attack on us. We totally support this position. *This is a major point of controversy that makes a serious split organizationally.*

As part of the mass movement and as a responsible mass organization we have the duty to put forward the ideas that will best serve that movement. When organizations consistently fight the building of that movement, it is our necessary task to expose them for it. We believe that the Alliance and the CPUSA are doing this and should be held accountable for it.

We believe that unity is vital in our work in the mass movement. However, unity must be based on more than working together. When politics are not put in command then that unity is false and can set back the movement. We do not think it is politically sound for us to ignore the present situation with the Alliance and the CPUSA. To shirk our responsibility in the struggle; to hide under a false hood of unity in order not to make waves is a dangerous trap that we should not fall into. Our task as a mass organization is to move the struggle of the masses forward. To do this we must expose those who are consciously holding that movement back.

We state that we do not believe that all organizations in the Alliance are guilty of holding the movement back. Our differences lie with the political leadership of the Alliance, and one of its major influences, the CPUSA. A letter of response written by the National Office is being circulated at this meeting and will be presented in the Alliance Workshop. We ask that people carefully read it and also read the response from Leavenworth and the Riverside Political Prisoners Defense Committee.

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## INTERNAL REPORT

1. Trends and Tendencies: The major trend which overshadows all others is the revitalization of VVAW/WSO in areas which have been dormant, particularly the Northwest, the Northeast, and Florida. The Northwest has a new chapter in Mountain Home, Idaho (in part as a result of contact with VVAW/WSO during the Chicago National GI Conference); a relatively new and growing chapter in Tacoma, Washington and increased activity in the chapters in Bellingham, Washington; and Eugene, Oregon. While there is much work to be done, particularly in the major cities, we see the work of these chapters as an excellent core for the future in that part of the country.

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In the Northeast where VVAW/WSO has just managed to survive over the past year, there are new chapters in Providence and in the Portsmouth-Dover area of New Hampshire, as a result of work done around the DC Demo, and a New England region is again beginning to function. There are five chapters in Florida. In Texas, where nothing has happened for some time (as far as the NO knows), there are signs of life in Houston which is also beginning to reach out to other parts of the state, notably the Killeen/Ft Hood area. The Rocky Mountain states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming have gone through internal re-organization and have the potential to grow in the near future. All of these areas the NO sees as a real plus for the organization; it means that we are able to reach out to people who are looking for the politics and programs that VVAW/WSO has to offer. These two are both new and imminent

On the minus side is Eastern Pa; while we don't yet have enough information to sum-up the problems there, from our understanding the region has almost collapsed, and what seemed to be promising work did not get carried forward. The initial sum-up suggests that some people were looking for quick victories and immediate gains; when these did not come, they were demoralized. Another lesson learned is the need for a regional structure which functions effectively and consistently. There have been many contacts from people in that region--usually isolated individuals--with nothing to plug into. A regional structure (office, coordinator, collective or whatever) which does follow up on these contacts is demonstrated in Ohio (with a new Cleveland chapter), in Florida (where a number of contacts have now become chapters), in Southern California (where a chapter is growing in San Diego), in New York (with the Syracuse chapter, and a number of contacts around the region), and in Wisconsin/Minnesota (where there is an active chapter in Minneapolis); all of these are the direct result of following up on contacts by regional or sub-regional officers of the organization. Where this has been done consistently, there are clear results (though not every contact is ever going to become a chapter); where it has not been done, little or nothing has happened.

Based on our contacts with chapters and regions, we in the NO have an urgent sense of the tremendous potential which the organization has. At this point, we see only the beginnings of the growth which is clearly possible. For many chapters, the Buffalo NSCM marked a consolidation of their ideas of what a program could be: but that meeting took place only four months ago, and we all know that the organization is built through consistent, daily work, not through magic, get-rich quick elixirs. Work takes time to bring concrete results. Chapters which went to work immediately after the Buffalo meeting in order to implement the focus, now have some practice which can be summed up--we point to the work reports on Chicago and Milwaukee as examples of what can be done.

In some places in the organization, practice has stopped as people have struggled for the organizational focus and the many political questions surrounding it; this force of theory and practice is clearly a mistake a fact which is further demonstrated by the loss of members which these chapters have suffered. While the struggle is good, and the political consolidation and unity which can come with it are vital, they cannot replace practice.

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The New York City chapter, from the information we have gotten, has been seriously divided over the question of focus, before and after the Buffalo meeting. They have not, however, let internal struggle keep them from practice; through a period of searching and experimentation, they have recently proposed a program with vets and GI focus, and have begun to test it out in practice--their Vet's Day actions are headed in that direction. We see this as applying theory in practice, and then using that practice to evaluate the theory--and we believe that is a good thing.

Chapters which came out of the Buffalo meeting with a consolidated position against a vets and GI focus have, at the very least, held their own during the last six months. The Buffalo chapter has established itself as a real community presence (over a period of years) and has been conducting on-going educational work in that community; strong support work around the Attica Brothers Defense has been possible through the size and strength of the chapter. In Dayton, there has been the ability to implement a consistent program of GI work at Wright-Patterson Airforce Base, though there are differing reports on the growth of membership in that chapter. In Northern California, we have gotten consistent input only from the Oakland chapter which is growing; a number of different projects are involved in the work including much energy taken up with the Bob Hood Defense Committee, as well as support for various struggles now going on in the Oakland area.

We also see real differences in the quality of growth--we do not feel that growth can be measured just in terms of numbers of people. Some chapters have consolidated their own line around a working class ideology; the result has been the beginning of an increase in membership among working people and their allies, with the militant and revolutionary approach which grows that political position. Chapters which have consistently worked toward organizing "movement" people into VVAW/WSO have often been able to do so--working on prisons one month, tenant's unions another, Indochina a third (or in some cases all three at once). Often, this has resulted in gathering together people who are interested in each of these projects. These chapters have often turned into a kind of movement support committee without an independent presence without the ability to reach out to people who are not already involved in the movement. Without the ability to bring into the anti-imperialist movement or into VVAW/WSO those people who are responding to gut-level disgust with the system. Growth, in short, means both quantity and quality--proletarian ideology leads to organizing masses of people into VVAW/WSO and into the anti-imperialist movement; "movement" organizing leads to shuffling people around inside the anti-imperialist movement and not real growth.

*Another major point of contention among many chapters*

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From the communications we get from around the country, we recognize that the levels of development of various chapters of the organization is vastly different. Not only are there consolidated political lines which differ from one another, but there

are many chapters for which some of the political issues are of only minor importance. Individuals and chapters in the organization range from consolidated Marxist-Leninists (all of whom do not agree with each other) to pissed-off vets and non-vets who are barely anti-imperialist. This is not a bad thing. Through the practice of the organization, consciousness will be raised and we will make fighters for one into fighters for all. But it is necessary to keep the levels of development in mind when discussing policies for the entire organization, whether that is around Winter Soldier, or the vets and GI focus, or anti-imperialism in general. There is a good deal of tunnel vision in the organization where specific chapters, from their practice, make the mistake of not seeing the needs and abilities of the organization as a whole, and this should be guarded against.

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There is also considerable variation in the actual practice of the organization in terms of people's approach to daily work. From the Milwaukee work report comes the clear lesson that effective work depends on daily practice over a long period of time. In terms of VA work, the Milwaukee chapter has not only learned to focus attention on a given hospital, but even a particular floor in that hospital; in short, they have learned the lesson that they should organize people to organize more people, and that to do that requires a specific target. The opposite tendency is best exemplified by a comment overheard by a member of the NO attending a meeting a few days after a demonstration at an office building: "Well, now we've educated these people, we're ready to go somewhere else next time." This "butterfly" approach--that is, we've left our mark on one flower, now we'll move on to the next one--may be doing something toward educating people; it is not organizing people.

We do see a real growth, both in quantity and in quality, in those chapters which have clearly implemented the focus on vets and GIs. It has meant that the chapters have gone out to where vets or GIs are--the VA, unemployment offices, college vets clubs, community vets meetings, factories, reserve meetings, offices of various government sponsored vets programs, community colleges, or technical schools, and, in the case of GIs, bases and National Guard meetings. Those chapters which have been most effective have not tried to do everything but have concentrated their efforts; as they grow larger, those efforts will be expanded. At the same time, these chapters have worked on local issues--for instance, local defense committees or political prisoner committees--always keeping their primary task in mind.

The first point to be drawn from this applies to the organization as a whole: a focus of work is important to the growth of any chapter, whether that focus is around amnesty or political prisoners or GIs or vets. Concentration of effort is essential. Second, the vets and GI focus has been effective where it has been well implemented. Third, the vets and GI focus has brought into the organization people who have not been involved in the struggle against imperialism in the past, though they have certainly suffered the effects of that system. These are people who, in our opinion, the organization should be reaching.

A positive note is that the organization is making steps toward becoming multi-national, though many of these steps are only tentative at this time. We see two ways in which we are beginning to deal effectively with the problems of national oppression: first, as pointed out in the Milwaukee work report, the demand for "Decent Benefits For All Vets" is a multi-national demand. Because work done around this demand--

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as well as the demand for a single type discharge--addresses the immediate needs of a cross-section of the population, it is relevant to the needs of vets, no matter what race. Second, there has been more consistent work around political prisoners where VVAW/WSO have consistently done support work with defense committees. The Gary Lawton case, on a national scale, and numerous other cases which are regional and/or local projects, demonstrate our attitude around the racism inherent in imperialism. And it is through our practice that we are seen by members of national minorities. We see this as an encouraging step and one which it is vitally important to build on in the future.

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2. Internal Structure of the Organization: The attempt to deal with the internal organization of VVAW/WSO through the working paper, as put forth at the Buffalo NSCM, was pretty much a failure. With the exception of the New York regional meeting, there has been no substantial input from the organization, nor has the NO been able to do its part in terms of putting out a prospective working paper. While we wish this had all been done, we recognize that members of the organization had higher priority issues to deal with--the NO was in the same position, and we believe that decision was correct given the time, energy and priorities. We have brought to this meeting a working paper which we hope can serve as a basis of discussion for re-writing the organizational by-laws; it is not as complete as it could be, nor does it have the organizational input it should have, as yet.

We feel that the essential change which must be made deals with the democratization of the organization; it is wrong for a region which has a number of strong chapters and a large membership to have the same number of votes in the NSC as a region with only one chapter and a much smaller membership. As a result we are starting with a proposal from the New York regional meeting and proposing that voting at the NSCM be based on 2 votes per region, plus 1 vote for each 15 voting members. While this system is not perfect, it goes a long way toward the essential democratization of the organization. Other points which flow into that proposal (such as definition of a voting member) are contained in our draft working paper.

With democratization must go discussion of what it means to be part of a national, democratically operated organization. Our position is set out on page 19 of the NO Clarification Paper: the organization must share the political perspective of anti-imperialism, and it must have programmatic unity. A chapter, for instance, which feels it should spend the majority of its time, over a long period, on women's issues should join an organization which nationally focuses its work on women's oppression; that is where they will get the most support and help. This does not negate the need to consistently work around local issues--that is essential. Nor does it negate the need to sometimes drop everything for some vital local work which is not directly connected with the VVAW/WSO national program. It does mean that the national program is based on consistent daily work, and to ignore that work for months at a time would be a real setback; even to neglect it temporarily should be done only for the most pressing political reasons.

We feel the organization made a step forward in its action of expelling the leadership of the ex-Tampa chapter from the organization--that this was done on correct political grounds since they consistently refused to work within the organization and to work around the national program, and actively supported enemies of the organiza-

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tion... We feel that the national organization, and specifically the NO, needs to take the responsibility of making these decisions. At this time, we have only loose guidelines in general, and the one set of specific guidelines for dealing with unprincipled organizations (that is, Trotskyist organizations specifically named in the "Proposal for Dealing with Unprincipled Organizations.") We believe that these criteria need to be tightened up in order to push the organization as a whole forward, and we are proposing some ideas (in the draft working paper) by which this can be done.

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There are two mechanical changes which we would make at this meeting--first, we concur with the proposal that Rhode Island and Conn be annexed to the New England region. This recognizes a de facto situation, and the New England region is now rebuilding and can handle this new territory. Second, we propose that the Carolinas no longer be considered a region; our contact there has been primarily with one individual in Raleigh, and that communication has been irregular. We have no sense of on-going VVAW/WSO work being done in that region at this time.

3. Work Reports: We believe that the most important documents at this meeting are the work reports; the Chicago and Milwaukee reports are examples of what work reports should be, both in explaining what was done and in drawing the lessons from practice. We cannot stress enough the need for chapters to sum-up their work and draw the lessons from it; at the same time, it is essential that chapters get that information to the NO--this has been one of the major failings of the organization as a whole, and one of the failings of the NO has been to not aggressively demand these detailed reports from the chapters and regions. We now rely on sum-ups given to regional meetings (such as those from Buffalo, Dayton, Oneonta) as well as consistent correspondence with many chapters; while this is both good and necessary, it is not enough. Chapters and regions need to analyze their own work and give us that analysis, rather than just giving us the raw material for us to do the analysis.

There are two aspects to getting these reports to the NO; first, we feel it is vital for the organization as a whole to learn from people's practice; second, we make our analyses (such as the original position paper) on the basis of what is happening around the country. We have to have that input. As we have said before, this means something more than just giving us a run-down of what happened (although that information is also important), but also a sum-up of the lessons learned; again, we point to the Milwaukee and Chicago work reports as good examples. While we commend those work reports and believe that they are extremely positive, we also feel that we should criticize the Milwaukee chapter for getting us a sum-up of an Oct. 27th action a month and a half after it occurred. While that is far better than not getting any sum-up, which is the case with many chapters, that could be improved. For instance, while we have heard about good work going on in Northern New Jersey, we have not seen anything in the way of a sum-up or even anymore description of what is happening there than a couple of phone calls. That denies both the NO and the rest of the organization the benefit of this practice.

We also recognize our inability at this time to make the most of these work reports. Our resources do not allow us to reprint all work reports we could be reprinting--we're stuck with the situation of reprinting summaries of these reports in the Internal Newsletter. In the future, as resources allow, we want to be able to

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move toward printing regular internal reports from the chapters; this would include things like the position papers which have been written concerning the future of the organization as well as the work reports. At this time, however, we have to rely on chapters and regions getting that information to as much of the organization as they can by mailing copies around the country.

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4. The Nature of Internal Struggle and Security: Because of the recent struggles that have gone on within VVAW/WSO during the recent months, we would like to briefly discuss the nature of struggle and how we feel it should be conducted. During the past four months, VVAW/WSO has been dealing with questions which are of major importance to the future of our organization and to the general anti-imperialist movement. Deciding the future of an organization is something which we feel needs the principled participation of us all. Such decisions are no minor thing. We believe that the struggle that has been going on within the organization has been a good thing and something which has made us grow and mature as a national organization.

When talking about struggle, we see that its purpose is to gain clarity of political line and through this, to push the anti-imperialist movement forward. Through struggle, positions are clarified and through this "clarification," a higher sense of unity develops. The basis for struggle is unity (i.e., we are all interested in seeing the organization move forward and become more effective). Likewise, the aim of struggle is also unity -- only a unity on a higher level. We don't think that struggle should be conducted for the purpose of reaching paper or phoney unity because this type of unity is usually achieved at the expense of the interests of the masses who are struggling against imperialism. It is for the purpose of reaching a higher level of unity that struggle is a good thing and something which pushes our organization and the people's movement forward.

We have seen that, for the most part, the internal struggle within VVAW/WSO has been carried out in a principled manner. We feel that the vast majority of people involved in this struggle have been genuinely concerned with the future and direction of VVAW/WSO and have honestly tried to move the organization forward. However, there have been times when we think the nature of the current struggle has taken on an ugly, unprincipled character, and this is something which can only hold us back. Since we see that the basis of struggle is unity, struggles will get out of hand if the desire for unity is not present. Along with this, the desire to provide constructive criticisms, rather than falling into name-calling and "trashing" is very important. Without principled and constructive criticism, we feel the struggle will degenerate and serve not the people, but the enemy.

With regard to all of this, one thing we see a real need for internally within VVAW/WSO is a better sense of security on all levels of the organization. We all know that the imperialist state is watching us closely, and because we are a threat to the existence of that state, our telephones are tapped, our meetings and their content discovered, etc. We have seen many occasions wherein the current struggle has fallen into gossip and slander, and we should be aware that this kind of behavior (whether it is intentional or not) will end up in the hands of our enemies. Unprinci-



pled talk and actions something which the government will use to try to distort the real purpose of struggle and undermine the unity which we feel is the basis of that struggle. We feel, therefore, that it is important for us to develop a higher consciousness around the fact that our enemies will try to use any tiny piece of information they receive which is potentially divisive. A stronger sense of security in our own ranks is necessary because when struggle fails to be real, healthy struggle and degenerates into gossip, rumor-mongering and slander, we push nothing forward except the ability of the imperialists to rule us. The people's movement is held back and it is the people of this country and around the world who suffer most.

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One aspect of the current struggle that we would like to specifically talk about is the tactic of trying to separate or single-out leadership from the rest of the organization. We have seen this tactic recently employed and we believe it is unprincipled and dangerous to the organization. We know that as national leadership, we are not perfect; and by no means are we saying that leadership is or should be "above" criticism. However, when leadership on any level of the organization makes mistakes, they should be criticized and struggled with directly and honestly. Distortions, gossip and slander are not correct ways to criticize anyone, including leadership; at best, this type of "attack" is non-productive, and it is often destructive. Leadership is a part of the organization, not something separate from it; and the purpose of leadership is to lead -- to provide political direction and programs for the organization (based on the in-put from the membership) and to implement the decisions of the majority.

One thing we should understand is where leadership comes from. On the chapter level, chapter members discuss the abilities of other members, decide which people they feel have the qualities for being leadership in their chapter, and then elect those people to leadership positions. The same should hold true on the regional and national levels of the organization. To "trash" leadership without offering anything constructive is to ignore and negate this process of election. It is saying that the masses of members are too stupid to realize that their leadership is bad and not serving their interests. Trashing leadership in an effort to divide it from the rest of the membership is a divisive tactic, shows no faith in the masses, and can lead to contradictions between the leadership and the membership which will destroy the cohesiveness, unity and purpose of the organization.

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RESPONSE TO "THE VENICE CRITIQUE"

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As leadership in VVAW/WSO, we feel it is our responsibility to comment on "The Venice Critique," a paper written by members of the Venice, California chapter in response to our original position paper on the future of the organization. We do not feel it is necessary to respond to all of the political points raised in the Venice paper as to why VVAW/WSO should not have a veteran and GI focus; in our position paper and subsequent clarification paper, we have already discussed why we feel VVAW/WSO must have a veteran and GI focus if it is to survive as a viable organization. However, since the "Venice Critique" has been held up by some chapters as the "alternative" to our position regarding a veteran and GI focus, we feel the necessity of commenting on what we see to be the real essence of the paper from Venice.

We believe that the Venice paper has, in reality, very little to do with the two-line struggle going on within VVAW/WSO concerning the question of a focus for the organization. The paper does make some political points about why we should not have a veteran and GI focus, but we feel the thrust of this critique is an attack on the National Office in particular, and on the organization in general. It is for this reason that we see the need to discuss some of the underlying points the Venice paper is making.

We begin with a few quotes from the second paragraph of the "Venice Critique." "In our opinion, they (the NO) are doing a disservice to the organization that they have been elected to serve... they should have put their faith in the VVAW/WSO masses to make the correct decision and concerned themselves with coordinating the activities of the organization." We feel that these few lines are at the heart of what the Venice paper is talking about, and we see this to be an out-right attack on the real function of the National Office. What the above quote is saying is that the NO should never have published a position paper with our views on the future of VVAW/WSO. This is our "disservice." We take strong issue with this idea. People are elected to the National Office, as well as to positions of regional coordinator, chapter coordinator, etc. to provide leadership. The Venice paper talks about members in the NO as being "elected to serve," but we see that "service" means a great deal more than carrying out the menial tasks of the organization. We see that we "serve" the organization in a variety of ways -- providing materials for the organization to use, providing information to chapters, answering requests from chapters, keeping chapters informed of the activities of the organization, etc. This is a vital function of the National Office. However, we are democratically elected to "serve" as leadership. Our primary service to the organization is to provide leadership -- both political, practical and programmatic. We do not see the function of the National Office as simply concerning ourselves "with coordinating the activities of the organization." This is only a part of our job. But to relegate national leadership to the periphery of the organization is to rob the organization of its very essence -- that of being a national organization with political and programmatic unity on all levels.

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Leadership of an organization, no matter what level of leadership is being talked about, is composed of more than shuffling papers across an endless row of desks. It is more than licking envelopes, and the other areas of "shit-work" that must be done to keep an organization functioning. We strongly believe that the primary purpose for having leadership is to take on the responsibility of providing programs and direction for the organization, to initiate new ideas, to come up with plans of action, to put forward positions on the future and current practice of the organization. In essence, the Venice paper is negating this role of leadership, and it is this that we feel is an attack on VVAW/WSO.

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The authors of the Venice paper make this point again on page 3 when it says that we are wrecking the organization as we try to fit VVAW/WSO into a make-believe United Front. We flatly reject this idea. We do not see that putting forward a position which we feel is crucial to the continued existence of VVAW/WSO is "wrecking" the organization. It is our responsibility to put positions forward and if we see that the organization must go through some necessary changes if it is to survive, it is our job to make this known to the membership. To not do so would be equal to leading the membership, and the masses of people in general, down a blind alley and would show a gross lack of concern for the organization and its purpose.

Later on page 3, the Venice paper says, "Ultra-leftism and its twin, right opportunism both reflect a lack of confidence in the ability of the masses or working people to find the solution to imperialism." We agree with this statement, but believe it is the members of the Venice chapter who wrote this paper that have a lack of faith in the masses and their ability to determine their own destinies. What the Venice paper is saying is that the NO can single-handedly "wreck" the organization, and the masses will be too stupid to do anything but let it happen. We reject this idea and feel that if our position is incorrect, the masses will prove this out. The membership of this organization is far smarter than the Venice paper is giving them credit for being; if the masses see that a position is wrong, destructive and leading the organization to disaster, they will combat this. To say that the NO can wreck the organization is to have no faith in the masses; our membership and our organization is far stronger than that. Contrary to what the authors of the Venice paper are saying, the members of the National Collective do have faith in the masses of VVAW/WSO members and in potential members to determine what the correct path is for the organization.

Another point we would like to address is the fact that throughout the Venice critique, the authors refer to the position saying that VVAW/WSO should have a veteran and GI focus as though the only people putting this position forward are the members of the NO. We see this consistent reference as an attempt by members of the Venice chapter to split the National Office off from the rest of the organization by continually referring to the NO as the people who are out to "wreck" the organization with their *scummy line*. *Two members of the Venice chapter were present at the Buffalo National Steering Committee Meeting.* In light of this, we assume they are aware that when a consensus vote was taken on the focus of the organization, a very large majority of the delegates felt that the position of focusing on veterans and GIs was a correct one. By implying that the NO is the only group-

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ing putting forward a position that we should have a ve... an... GI focus negates the fact that a large majority of people at the Buffalo NSCM also hold that same position. In fact, you are holding a majority of the membership in contempt and implying that they might also be wreckers of the organization. However, since the NO is being singled-out as being the wreckers, we see this as a move to separate the leadership of VVAW/WSO from the membership and we believe this to be a divisive and dangerous tactic which negates the role of leadership within the organization and which can lead to the destruction of cohesiveness and purpose of the organization. Again, what this all boils down to is whether the leadership of the organization has the responsibility to lead the organization, or is it to sit idly by and tail behind whatever ideas arise, and simply concern itself with the day-to-day affairs of keeping the organization functioning.

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"Another idea contained in the Venice critique which we feel the need to respond to is the idea that the NO doesn't know what's going on in the organization. This "criticism" has been raised elsewhere in VVAW/WSO also, and in some instances, it is true that we can't know everything that is going on, that all chapters do not communicate with us regularly and that we can't know every idea and every action that is going on in the organization. However, we strongly disagree with the idea that we "betray an unfamiliarity with the organization." Again, we see this as an attempt to split the NO from the rest of the organization. As national leadership, it is our responsibility to know what is going on in the organization, and we believe we have a good understanding of what VVAW/WSO is doing nationally. That is the nature of our job. The Venice paper says, "Our experience has been just the opposite of what the NO alleges the political situation to be." We would ask the Venice chapter what understanding they have as to what is going on in New England, in Ohio, in Washington, in Maryland, etc. Without having the consistent in-put and contact with these regions, we find it amazing that they can know what is going on there. We feel that this idea in the Venice paper points out a problem which is common in the organization -- "tunnel vision." It is not a serious problem, but it does exist and must be overcome. Chapters cannot make decisions for the national organization based on their understanding of what is going on with their specific community and then apply that to all other chapters in the organization. Nor do we think we have all the answers as to how to develop programs for the organization as a whole. Coming up with programs and direction for the organization requires the in-put and discussions of as many chapters as possible on the national level -- with the National Office between steering committee meetings, and at steering committee meetings themselves. By summing up this in-put we determine what is the correct path for the organization to follow. Through this process, the organization can determine what works in the majority of chapters, what the majority of chapters are involved with and thinking about. This is what being a national organization is all about -- it is not looking at one or two communities and then proclaiming that the solution to the organization's future has been found. It requires the in-put and participation of the chapters across the country to determine what the organization should be doing.

The National Office is in regular communication with the vast majority of chapters and all regions in the organization. There is the need for improvement in those communications and we feel that chapters should be doing regular work reports which sum up their work and get those reports to the NO (we might remark that we have never received such reports from the Venice chapter). This will ob-

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viouly facilitate our understanding of the organization as well as providing us with information to get back out to the rest of the chapters so that everyone's understanding of the organization will increase. But until chapters begin summing up their work on a regular basis and get those summations to us, we will have to rely on the many letters, phone calls, personal discussions, etc. that we are involved with regularly.

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We would like to ask the authors of the Venice paper and the organization where they think leadership comes from. We did not "fall from the sky;" all of us have been members of VVAW/WSO for many years. We have worked in chapters just like everyone else, we have known the problems that arise in chapters and regions, and through our consistent contact with chapters through the NO, we feel we are still aware of those problems, as well as the successes. Likewise, our original position paper did not drop from out of nowhere. It was written to help guide the organization as we looked around, saw chapters dying off, regions disappearing, and people losing interest because they lacked direction and purpose. Our position paper was our contribution to finding a solution to some of the problems we saw within VVAW/WSO. We were not trying to cram some idea down people's throats when we published our paper. Instead, we were trying to live up to our responsibility to provide leadership to the organization by putting our position forward on what we felt the future of the organization should be.

We do not see that putting forward a position is some sort of crime. We have put our thoughts out and will continue to do so. In return, we hope that others will do the same. This is how struggle is conducted -- by discussing ideas and practice. In fact, we criticize the two members of the Venice chapter who attended the Buffalo NSCM for not always putting forward their ideas consistently. We are aware that the two delegates from Venice are members of the Communist Party, USA, and we hope that the CPUSA has positions on some of the questions that were discussed at the NSCM. However, on some of these questions, the Venice delegates did not put forward the ideas of the CPUSA as we wished they had done so that the membership could become aware of those ideas and struggle with them. We obviously believe that our position on the future of VVAW/WSO is a correct one and we will continue to struggle for it. Others will do the same. But we realize that in the final analysis it will be the masses of VVAW/WSO members who determine what the future of the organization will be. The decision rests with them; not with us.

The final point we would like to address with regard to the Venice Critique is the question of unity. The Venice paper says that, "In pursuing the struggle, the national office appears to neglect the importance of unity." We do not think we have neglected the importance of unity, but we do think that the unity we want the organization to reach is a higher level of unity than is desired by the authors of the Venice paper. As a national organization, we feel it is essential that the organization have a high degree of both political and programmatic unity. We do not mean that everyone should accept a given "line" on the world situation, but we do mean that the organization should have political unity on the nature and purpose of our organization. We also think that programmatic unity is vital if we are to truly be a national organization, rather than a conglomeration of individual chapters all possessing the same name. Unity is more than keeping still and letting chapters "do their own thing" and

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not try to build a higher degree of cohesiveness in the organization. The idea we get from the Venice paper is that the authors would prefer that leadership not lead the organization towards achieving this political and programmatic unity. Rather, the authors of the Venice paper seem to ignore the democratic processes of VVAW/WSO for determining the work and direction of the organization, and instead, would prefer more "autonomy" for the chapters. We find this idea to be based on petit-bourgeois ideology calling for "individualism" above all else.

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Since we do not believe we are neglecting the importance of unity, we would like to explain just how we think unity is reached. There is a big difference between principled unity and paper or phoney unity. The latter is a type of unity which is simply declared in order to down-play struggle. In the majority of cases, phoney unity is easily reached, but usually at the expense of the interests of the masses of people who are struggling against imperialism. We are not out to reach this type of unity. Instead, principled unity is reached through struggle - principled struggle. We begin our struggle with a basis of unity, and our final aim is to achieve a higher level of unity. This higher level of unity is reached through the introduction of ideas and discussing, implementing, and summing up those ideas. We believe this process is occurring within VVAW/WSO and we believe it is a healthy process that will push the membership, the organization, and the anti-imperialist movement forward.

The Venice paper says that because the NO is striving for this higher level of unity through struggle, by introducing our position paper, we are "falling into the error of using Trotskyist tactics." We ask if trying to move the organization ahead, if living up to our responsibility to provide political and programmatic leadership for the national organization is employing Trotskyite tactics? We don't think so. On page 2 of the Venice paper, the authors talk about "factionalism." To us, there is a big difference between struggle and factionalism. Factionalism consists of working and maneuvering with the specific purpose of splitting an organization in order to form something else. We do not think that our position paper has been factionalizing, nor do we think that papers like the one written by the Buffalo chapter is factionalizing. The purpose of both of these papers has been to contribute to the struggle for the purpose of building VVAW/WSO as both the NO and the Buffalo chapter see this building taking place -- not to split the organization.

It may be that our position paper did "rock the boat" a bit, but we do not think that is a bad, or a Trotskyite thing. We do not see that the position paper has "wrecked" or "split" the organization. In fact, we do not see the organization being "wrecked" at all. We see the organization undergoing more growth during the past few months than has existed in the organization for years. We agree with one idea contained in the Venice paper in that struggle can be non-progressive and hold an organization back. In fact, we see the Venice Critique as an example of non-progressive struggle in that it uses the honest attempts at clarification of political positions to attack the leadership of the organization, and in turn, the organization as a whole. We see the Venice Critique as an example of non-progressive struggle with the purpose of "wrecking" the organization. We consider that to be non-progressive and divisive.

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The struggle that is currently going on is not holding VVAW/WSO back; the struggle is building toward a higher level of unity. Moving from a low level of unity

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In order to achieve a higher level of unity, what all of us should be involved with. We should not attempt to stifle the attempts made to reach a higher level of unity, we should not try to shove the struggle under the rug and declare some sort of phony unity. Instead, we should be pushing attempts to reach unity forward.

What we see the Venice paper saying is that VVAW/WSO should have "Unity-Unity-Unity." We feel this is a destructive idea and one which will lead the organization to stagnation and ineffectiveness. This is because without struggle, whatever unity does exist will fade away and growth will cease. Instead, we see that what is going on in VVAW/WSO is "Unity-Struggle-Greater Unity." It is this formulation which will push VVAW/WSO, and the entire anti-imperialist movement forward. And it is because of this that struggle within VVAW/WSO will continue in the future around a variety of questions which must be addressed by our organization, as well as by the entire movement which is fighting to wipe imperialism from the face of the earth.

As stated at the beginning of this paper, we feel that the Venice paper has very little to do with the current two-line struggle going on within VVAW/WSO. Instead, the Venice paper is making an attempt to split the leadership of the organization from the membership, and we see this not only as an attack on the NO, but on the entire organization as well. We feel that the Venice paper exhibits a lack of faith in the masses of this organization to determine what the future of VVAW/WSO should be by implying that the NO can single-handedly "wreck" the organization with the publication of a position paper concerning what we see, as the necessary future of VVAW/WSO. We feel that the Venice paper is negating the role of leadership within the organization -- an idea which can lead to the destruction of the cohesiveness, unity and purpose of the organization. And we see that the Venice paper is trying to negate the importance of unity and struggle within the organization by saying that unity is primary, while struggle to reach a higher level of unity is divisive and "trotskyite." We reject the ideas put forward in this paper and feel that the authors of it are being dishonest by cloaking their attacks on the NO in a paper which pretends to deal with the two-line struggle. Under a "Left" cover, they have attempted to use the current struggle in the organization in order to divide political leadership from the membership. They have used the struggle as a springboard for their attempts to trash the real functions of leadership. We feel that this is the real essence of the Venice Critique and we condemn this tactic because it not only fails to push the real struggle forward, but in fact, holds the struggle back.

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## FINANCES

As is normal because of security, the breakdown of the past year's expenses and collections will be given orally. Since the National Office runs itself as a corporation it is liable for all appropriate taxes, reports and other nonsense that city, state and federal governments require. There are several reasons for incorporation, and not being incorporated does not mean that these forms and taxes no longer apply. Being incorporated makes the organization a legal entity as if it were a person. If any suits or actions come down on the business, the officers of the business cannot be held responsible unless criminal negligence is proved. All this mumbo-jumbo can get mountainous as new forms are discovered that must be filed, minutes taken from meetings of the Board of Directors, etc. So, if any region wishes to incorporate, check it out thoroughly.

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As to the financial status of the NO, it is terrible. With the rising economic crisis, the amount of money we spend each month doing the same amount of work has skyrocketed. Internally, we have started economizing wherever we can, from food money to pencils. The major leaps were in postage and paper-related products, which is just about everything we spend money on. However, even though we are cutting back, it is not enough. This office will definitely suffer or be incapacitated within a very short period if certain basics do not change.

Primary in these changes is the fact that the things we produce for the organization's use at this time do not pay for themselves. The newspaper, the buttons, the pamphlets, everything we have put out has come nowhere near its cost. This is one of the fundamental targets of what has to be changed. If we can receive back what the materials cost us to produce, then there would be no financial problem. Our direct mail fundraising would pay for everything else plus leave a surplus for putting out new things and adequately meeting the needs of the organization. If the situation does not change, that is, if chapters cannot pay for even half the cost, then we soon will have to stop putting out materials.

The second target is dues. To date, we have not received anywhere near what dues are owed. Whole regions have not paid any dues, while in the other regions, whole chapters have not paid any. We think that part of the developing criteria for membership in VVAW/WSO is paying one's dues. Most other organizations of our nature require dues of not only their members, but even of their chapters. We think a serious campaign must be waged by the leadership of the organization around dues, and that this question is not just a "money" one, but is a very sharp political one. If our own members will not support their organization, we cannot expect others outside the organization to do so. Paying dues goes to the heart of the question of what is an organization and what are the responsibilities of its members. If VVAW/WSO is to grow and be a real mass organization, then the members must be made to see the importance of supporting that organization with part of their money. Many people are giving 24 hours a day of their lives to VVAW/WSO, but that is only one part of what it takes. It takes financing, and that must come from the membership.

*We do not see the crisis of imperialism abating in the future. With that crisis comes the absolute necessity of showing how members are the backbone of the organization and that they have a direct responsibility in running it. It is time to buckle down and meet that responsibility.*

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This report will be divided up into four parts. These sections will briefly deal with the recent events of the amnesty movement since August, the Steve Grossman Exile Tour, the NCUUA Amnesty Conference, and coalition work. We will not go into each of these sections in great detail, as several of these areas have already been written about in the internal newsletter. What we hope to be able to do is generally outline the work that we have been doing and the relations that we have with other amnesty organizations. We hope that this guideline can be followed in the amnesty workshop as a way to deal with the many issues that have transpired in the last four months. We believe that by summing up our recent work, we will be able to look to the future and see how best to build the anti-imperialist amnesty movement.

### Recent Events in the Amnesty Movement

In September, President Ford (hot on the heels of his pardon for Richard Nixon) offered his plan for clemency for war resisters. The plan was largely directed towards draft resisters and military resisters. Largely ignored were the 580,000 vets with less-than-honorable discharges and the countless civilian resisters who are serving or have served time in jail, or who are facing prosecutions. The clemency offer, fell far short of being the universal and unconditional amnesty that is the call of the amnesty movement. This bogus amnesty plan was totally rejected by the amnesty movement, and correctly so. The real thrust of the amnesty movement is that people who resisted the war in Indochina, or the racism and repression of the military were correct and the real criminals are those who began and continue the war -- the Rockefellers and others of the ruling class. It is the duty of people to resist wars of imperialism.

Immediately after the clemency program was announced, organizations working around amnesty across the country, including VVAW/WSO, denounced the sham amnesty. This turn of events in the amnesty movement escalated the work of the movement and for the first time, amnesty was truly a household word. What followed were many demonstrations across the country directed at demanding universal and unconditional amnesty. One of the most important events during this period was the 2nd Exiles Conference that was held in Toronto at the end of September.

Almost as soon as the amnesty was announced, eyes turned towards Canada to see what the reaction of the exile community would be. This was due, in large part, to the bourgeois media and the general thrust of the Ford statement; that being that amnesty was solely for exiles and not for people in the United States.

The exiles gathered from across Canada, France, Sweden, and England (one delegate from each of these latter three countries). There was unanimous agreement at the exile conference to call for a boycott of the Ford plan. Of importance at the conference were the resolutions of the exiles calling for an end to imperialist aggression, support for liberation struggles around the world, and an understanding that the largest segment of those in need of amnesty were the vets with less-than-honorable discharges.

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The conference was a clear victory for the exile groups and for the amnesty movement in general. It successfully analyzed the Ford clemency and as a result, drew wide support from the amnesty organizations in the United States. The call for the boycott was announced throughout the country and it has been successful. The government's hopes for a great influx at Christmastime never materialized. The analysis of the exiles proved correct -- that exiles both organization and unorganized, rejected the terms of the clemency. While thousands of people did accept it, the overwhelming majority didn't.

There is now talk of extending the clemency plan in order to elevate the numbers of people who accept it. This is also a victory for the amnesty movement and should be utilized in our propaganda.

One way in which representatives of the exile groups dealt with the boycott was to have one exile come to the U. S. to discuss the clemency and give the American people a chance to hear what an exile thought. As a result, Steve Grossman and his traveling companion, Evangeline, came back to the U. S. for two weeks to speak of the clemency and the correctness of resistance to the war in Indochina.

Steve Grossman Tour DC, Ohio, Mo., W.S.  
CANADA, ILL. FOREIGN

To briefly summarize Steve and Evangeline's tour, they came to the U. S. and Steve spoke at the Louisville Conference of NCUUA and announced his intentions of traveling throughout the Northeast and Midwest. Steve was resoundingly welcomed at the conference and made an excellent speech about why the clemency did not speak to the real issues. From there, he proceeded to New York City, Washington, DC, Buffalo, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Cleveland, Akron, Kent, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Chicago. He spoke at each city, did radio programs, gave interviews, appeared on a TV show with Charles Goodell, Chairman of the Clemency Board, and was able to talk to many people and see the work that the amnesty movement was doing. With the exception of Louisville and New York City, all of the tour was arranged by VVAW/WSO chapters.

It should be noted that all of the chapters did excellent work in arranging the tour. On short notice, it was remarkable that so much was set up. While the success of the tour varied from place to place, all should be praised for doing what was done. Steve and Evangeline were greatly impressed with this work and so were we in the National Office.

The idea of the tour was to give the opportunity to explain the clemency from the perspective of those in exile who are looked at as the recipients of the clemency program. Steve did much to explain that the real amnesty fight was here in the U. S. We would like to quote Steve who gave us the following statement for Winter Soldier. "The tour reminded me of the need to keep our demand for a single-type discharge up front in all our amnesty work. Getting rid of the present punitive discharge system will remove one of the most repressive weapons the government has for controlling resistance to genocidal, imperialist wars. The single-type discharge will move us far forward in our fight for the right to resist unjust wars -- that right is the very meaning of universal and unconditional amnesty."

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We agree with this analysis. The real fight for amnesty is mainly in the U. S. and speaks to the class nature of America. While it is extremely important to fight for all resisters, we should never fail to put forward the 580,000 vets with less-than-honorable discharges as the recipients of a universal and unconditional amnesty.

We believe that the exiles idea of having a representative to come to the U. S. to speak was a correct idea. There are many lessons to learn from this tour and we will briefly summarize them in the section dealing with coalition work.

#### NCJUA Conference

At the end of November, the National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty (NCUUA) held its second annual conference in Louisville, Kentucky. The major importance of this conference was that it gave VVAW/WSO the opportunity to work with many representatives from around the country and to talk about ways to best implement a program to win universal and unconditional amnesty. It afforded us the chance to put forward our organizational, anti-imperialist perspective. As most participants at the conference were not from anti-imperialist organizations, we learned a great deal about how we put forward our views in the workshops before such audiences. At our sum up meetings, we realized that often we came on too hard and didn't always explain our views in the best way. But by and large, we summed up our work at the conference as progressive and good.

We learned also that there is a real amnesty movement made up, for the most part, of people in liberal and church organizations. It was clear that VVAW/WSO is the leading anti-imperialist organization working around amnesty on a nationwide basis. As such, the conference gave us the opportunity to see how our work has pushed the issue of amnesty forward and how best we work with these other organizations. (There is a more in-depth analysis of the conference written in Newsletter #31. Hopefully everyone has read it and we can use that as the basis for the discussion around the workshop).

#### Coalition Work

We feel that the best way we can build the amnesty movement is to build the anti-imperialist veterans movement. By doing this, we will be able to take up the demand of a single-type discharge and decent benefits for all veterans, and from them unfold the demand for universal and unconditional amnesty. As vets with bad discharges are the largest category of war and military resisters, what better way can we mobilize people in the fight for amnesty? By doing this, we will make the amnesty movement stronger because it will involve many people in the struggle that have not been involved before.

In building the anti-imperialist vets movement, it will necessitate that we, as an organization, will spend more time working around the struggles of veterans and organizing veterans into the anti-imperialist movement. The question arises, "Well how do we do work around amnesty if we are going to be working around veterans?"

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In addition to unfolding amnesty around the vets issues, we feel that this can best be done by beginning to work more in coalitions that are concerned with amnesty. We have seen the emergence of some ideas around coalition work that we think are

worthy of attention by the chapters. Of course, VVAW/WSO is part of NCUUA.

This coalition is broad-based and has many different types of politics represented. The one common point of unity is that all groups put forward a line on universal and unconditional amnesty for all war resisters. Another point of unity is that we call for the ending of the war in Indochina. These points are a good basis on which to form coalitions.

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While some of the ways to work toward implementation of these points of unity are not exactly what VVAW/WSO puts forward (i. e. working through Congress) we should understand that many organizations do see that this is the way. As part of coalitions, we could put forward our views and in many cases, could begin the process of building a higher level of unity around work on amnesty; one that relies on organizing the masses of people in the U. S., rather than depending on the system.

The success of NCUUA shows that this can be done locally. For instance, in Ohio, VVAW/WSO is beginning to formulate a plan in which various cities in the state would initiate amnesty coalitions and eventually affiliate with NCUUA. The Cincinnati chapter, while putting forward a view that VVAW/WSO should have a vets and GI focus, see the need to build the amnesty movement. They are in the process of formulating a plan to build an amnesty coalition. They will approach various organizations, from church groups to the Revolutionary Student Brigade. (It should be noted here that in past newsletters, we have referred to the coalition work that was successful in building the Steve Grossman tour in Cincinnati. We were given this impression by Steve Grossman, but we now understand that this coalition does not exist. The success of the exile tour in Cincinnati was due to the efforts of VVAW/WSO and the RSB who worked together to build the meetings).

We think that this model is correct. First, it would give us the opportunity to work with many liberal and church organizations and put forward our anti-imperialist view of the amnesty questions. We learned that this could be done at the Louisville conference. Second, it would allow the organization to build the vets movement in a more serious, programmatic way and still allow for us to build the amnesty movement, without taxing our resources. Third, by involving a broader-based coalition of groups it would make amnesty work more cohesive and programmatic. Important in all this is that we involve anti-imperialist organizations in the coalition effort, rather than go it alone to develop the political line of the coalition.

There are, of course, problems in working in these coalitions. We can see by some chapter experiences that the struggle over political line is prime. In Santa Barbara, California, the chapter was having difficulty in continuing to work in the coalition they were in because they felt that the coalition was too liberal and not putting forward anti-imperialist politics. In Rochester, on the other hand, many of the church organizations dropped out of the coalition because the politics were anti-imperialist. We also can see from our experience in Louisville that there is a question of how these coalitions and groups are approached. As we stated in Newsletter #31, in many cases we came on too forcefully in putting forward our politics. While we agree that it was a strong sense of understanding the issue that caused us to do this, we must learn how to put forward and struggle around giving the amnesty movement a more left stance. We can also see that if we had a closer working relationship with many organizations doing amnesty work, we could have built the Grossman tour more successfully since it was organized on such short notice. We hope that we can discuss in the amnesty workshop this question in more detail and come up with a good formulation for developing our coalition work around amnesty.

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1A. The past year has seen a significant strengthening of VVAW/WSO's GI work at many levels of the organization. Externally, we hosted the National GI Conference in Chicago, October 11-14--the first national meeting of this type in over 2 years. The conference was attended by most of the groups doing active GI organizing in the continental US. While we do not feel that much overall unity was achieved as a result of this conference, we do feel that it was an important step forward in that it clarified some of the important questions now facing the GI movement. Unfortunately the notes of the conference will not be available to the entire organization. They are printed in the "IP: News & Discussion Bulletin," Issue #24 and were only sent to active VVAW/WSO organizing projects. A basic summary of the National GI Conference is contained in newsletter #30 and in the notes to the Thanksgiving GI organizers workshop. (The workshop notes reflect much of the same political debate that went on at the National GI Conference).

1B. Internally, VVAW/WSO's GI work made some very real gains. Many existing chapters and regions strengthened and expanded their work or began developing programs and GIs. The VVAW/WSO chapters in Yokosuka, Japan, Iwakuni, Japan, and Okinawa are continuing to do very important work. They have been involved in organizing around the struggles of the Iwakuni 5, the homecoming of the USS Midway and the recent strike at Camp Hague in Okinawa. In Ohio, the Central Ohio Military and Veterans Counselling Center, a project of the Columbus chapter, is expanding its work at Rickenbacker AFB and has recently moved into work with Navy and Marine Reserve units in the area. The Dayton chapter, home office of VVAW/WSO NOSCAM/NGIP from July, 1972 to November 1974, has now begun an active duty organizing project at Wright Patterson AFB in addition to the GI counselling project it has been operating there for some time now. Dayton VVAW/WSO has also been operating a weekly two-hour radio program, "The Winter Soldier Show," which GIs at Wright Patterson can receive.

Highway 13, one of VVAW/WSO's oldest GI projects, is continuing its work at Ft. Meade, holding a number of GI study groups, doing support work for a strike by base workers there and distributing their paper, Highway 13. Due to a recent court victory, Highway 13 is now being distributed on base. Oakland VVAW/WSO has begun doing GI work in the Bay area, most recently being involved with a struggle by seamen and their wives around unsafe working conditions on the USS Coral Sea. The Long Beach chapter has begun doing outreach to GIs in the area and has gotten some GIs stationed there to come to VVAW/WSO chapter meetings. Onconta VVAW/WSO is working with National Guardsmen in a unit in Onconta. The GI Assistance Project has become a project of VVAW/WSO chapter in St. Louis and is exploring prospects for GI work in the area. In Homestead, Florida has a chapter composed of a number of GIs from Homestead AFB. We have not received a project report from there.

On the other side of the coin, work at the Red Door VVAW/WSO in Colorado Springs (near Ft. Carson) and the work Denver VVAW/WSO was doing at Lowery AFB has suffered greatly in the past year. Work at the Red Door is now at a minimal level while work had come to a complete stop at Lowery until very recently. The region is, however, planning to restart their work in the near future. Because of the many bases in the area, the Colorado region is now in the process of re-evaluating its GI work to determine which bases are the most important for them to be working & organizing at.

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1C. Perhaps one of the most encouraging aspects of our GI work has been the affiliation of a number of solid GIs.

tion of a number of solid GI projects with the organization ( ) past year. The GI Alliance in Tacoma, WA, one of the oldest existing GI projects, became a member of VVAW/WSO in August 1977. The Liberated Trucks, in Hailua, Hawaii, another well established GI project, has also formally affiliated with VVAW/WSO. Members of the Covered Wagon GI project in Mountain Home, Idaho, formed a regional organizing committee of VVAW/WSO shortly after the National GI Conference. In San Diego, a chapter organizing committee has been set up by VVAW/WSO members who have had experience both internally in VVAW/WSO and externally in the GI movement. They are doing GI organizing at the numerous navy installations located around San Diego. These new VVAW/WSO GI projects have made a significant contribution to our GI work. With their varied and broad experience in GI work, VVAW/WSO is going to have a greatly increased ability to sum up and analyze its practice in GI organizing in a much more thorough and consistent way.

2A. It is the position of the NO that VVAW/WSO needs to begin seriously expanding the scope of its GI work. We feel that GI work should become a primary focus within VVAW/WSO and we base that opinion on two factors. One is that agitation and education of enlisted people in the US military is an essential part of the overall anti-imperialist struggle, both in terms of raising the political consciousness of GIs and ultimately in developing the political strength to neutralize or at least disrupt the effectiveness of the military as a tool of US imperialism. The other factor is the base of our organization. As an organization with a base of veterans and GIs, we are ideally suited to play an important part in the GI movement. We see a focus on vets and GIs as being crucial to the future of VVAW/WSO and its role in building the anti-imperialist movement. While we are not saying that every region and every chapter has to immediately begin doing some sort of GI organizing, we do believe that there is the potential for greatly increasing the amount of GI work now being done. If and when a region or chapter is capable of initiating such work, they should by all means begin to do so. When, as in the N. work report, it is impossible or not in the best long run interests of the VVAW/WSO chapter to immediately begin doing GI work, we naturally agree it is best to wait. People shouldn't jump off half-cocked into a GI organizing program. As with all our work, it is essential that what tasks we do take up, we take up well. This is certainly true for our GI organizing. It is not in the overall interests of the organization or the anti-imperialist movement to begin a GI effort, or any other project for that matter, that we are really not prepared to see through.

2B. One of the basic problems with regions or chapters that do have the capability of initiating some form of GI work is their geographic isolation from military installations. One very real alternative solution to chapters in such a position is to work with Reserve or National Guard units in their areas. There are very few cities without some sort of reserve or guard units, and the importance of working with reserve and guard units cannot be overemphasized. Their role in attacking the struggles of the working class, as we saw in the strike of the truckers and as was raised as a very real possibility during the recent coal miners strike, is definitely going to increase as the economic crisis deepens. Reserves and guardsmen have been used as scabs, strike breakers, riot cops and are a potential force for initiating martial law in our communities. Any and all work we can do with them in building a struggle against the domestic use of the military against the working class must be taken up.

Before initiating a reserve or national guard project, chapters should investigate the reserve and guard units in their area to determine which are most strategically important. Some units are actively involved in riot control training or similar activity

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and are most likely to be used to suppress people in the community or on the job. Other units have supply or administrative roles and would not be as important to organize. Work with reserves and guardsmen in the past has shown that there are often some units with a larger proportion of working class or Third World people and this should also be investigated.

THE NCIP: A BASIC HISTORY

GARY STAIGER

MEMBER OF SUBJECT ORGANIZATION

3A. VVAW/WSO's GI work began in Dayton, Ohio, in July of 1972, under the guidance of Gary Staiger. Later to be called NOSCAM; the project's goals were to bring GIs into the organization and also to encourage the organization as a whole to take up GI work more seriously. There were only a couple of VVAW/WSO GI projects at the time, but in the course of the mass work and political development in the organization, VVAW/WSO's GI work began to grow.

After the breakup of the Chicago Area Military Project (CAMP) in September of 1973, two members of that group came to the National Office of VVAW/WSO to offer their energy and experience in helping us develop our GI work. It was soon decided that it would be desirable to set up another GI office in Chicago to continue and broaden the work that was being done out of Dayton. It was also felt that the time had come for GI work to become an integral part of the organization's work nationally. Later in 1973, GI NEWS was born, correspondence and contact in the GI movement expanded, and the case of Melvin X. Smith became a priority.

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In 1974, our GI work continued to grow, both in Dayton and Chicago, and by November, the Dayton and Chicago offices were consolidated into one office in Chicago. The decision to consolidate was based on two considerations. The first was the opinion of the last NSCM that GI work should be an integral part of the work of the organization and that the National Collective should be directly responsible for political leadership between NSCMs. The second was the simple logistical problem of having two GI offices. Both political and bureaucratic problems arose as a result.

As part of the organization's growing commitment to GI work, the NSC, at its meeting in December, 1973, decided to sponsor a national conference of GIs and GI organizers. In the following year, the NCIP played a major role in preparing to host the conference.

INTERNAL OPERATION: Most of our internal operations consist of letter writing. We try to write projects (VVAW/WSO and non-VVAW/WSO) as often as possible, although our practice in this area can stand to improve. We have failed to correspond regularly with the projects, and we have also failed in the really important task of initiating and carrying on political dialogue and debate around GI work, particularly in the organization. We are going to be concentrating on remedying this in the future.

We write to GIs and we've been a lot more consistent about this work than any of our other letter writing. We have been averaging 10-20 GI letters a week, and now that GI NEWS is being more widely distributed, this number is increasing.

The third type of communications we have is with other movement groups and with

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Individuals who are interested in the GI movement. These letters usually involve information requests, resource or research requests, and follow-up information on stories from GI NEWS. In addition to answering questions and requests, we try to turn people on to local chapters of the organization where appropriate.

We are also now handling GI memberships, but we have not yet worked out what our system will be for GI memberships. We feel that is a good idea to send out information packets as the Dayton office had been doing, and we are currently trying to decide what literature should go in these packets. In the meantime, we are sending out Winter Soldier GI NEWS, and other literature that we have in stock.

Literature: Our main use of literature will be in the GI packets when we get them together. One thing we need right now is suggestions from people about stuff that would be good for GIs. We will be ordering the latest edition of TURNING THE REGS AROUND, when we get the money together, and other old standbys like SOLDIERS AND STRIKERS. There is some stuff that we will have to consider producing ourselves, particularly a pamphlet on racism in the military (we will probably use the pamphlet produced by the Yokosuka chapter in preparing this). People should also give us ideas for what kind of literature they would like to see us produce.

Finances: Since the National GI Project operates from the National Office we are dependent on the same income as the rest of the NO uses for its operations. The financial demand is increasing steadily and the resources are drying up. So it is becoming essential that we have financial support.

National Coordination: NGIP is the national coordinating center for VVAW/WSO work, and we are attempting to deal seriously with our responsibilities in this area. An important task is the VVAW/WSO GI organizing workshop weekends which we hope to hold twice a year in the future. We hope these workshops will struggle around developing the strategy and tactics necessary to move our GI work forward. As well as developing a program for our GI work, we hope that these workshops will serve their function of doing the necessary preliminary discussion and proposal writing for the NSCMs. There are other tasks that we could take on in terms of our coordinating work and we hope that various ideas can be discussed at the workshop. We have been considering an internal bulletin containing project reports and other discussions that people feel are important to the work of the organization.

3C. - GI NEWS--When GI NEWS was first published in November of 1973, it was in an offset, stapled format which made it impractical for mass distribution. Its content was also similar to the old CAMP NEWS which was not designed to be a mass paper. As the interest and dedication to GI work increased during the winter of 1973-74, we began planning for GI NEWS to become a mass paper, similar to WINTER SOLDIER, but aimed more particularly at GIs: we definitely see it as an organizers tool, not as an alternative anti-imperialist newspaper.

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In GI NEWS we try to cover as much of the GI struggles and other important news as possible each month. We like to carry a broad range of material including articles on racism, oppression or women, working and living conditions, and what the military is up to around the world and in the US. Every month we plan to have each of the following included: general article about the work of VVAW/WSO (vets day demos, amnesty,



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(c), a section on fighting the [redacted] (if there is a space conflict between the poster and written content, the story will usually take precedence). Our overall aim in choosing content is 1) try to cover a wide range of struggles in the military, 2) to present the articles in an analytic manner rather than as straight news stories, 3) to make the paper attractive so that it can be used easily for mass outreach, and 4) include original graphics.

We want the paper to be suitable for both mass outreach and internal education, with the emphasis on outreach. The paper attempts to focus on how GIs are fighting back against the oppression of the military, rather than only on how GIs are being oppressed. We link up the local and specific struggles of GIs with the overall struggle against imperialism in concrete ways. People come to an anti-imperialist consciousness, not out of the sky, but as a result of their day-to-day experience. It is our task to push forward the struggle and provide an analysis (education and agitation), which the paper attempts to do.

We are still developing an approach to how GI NEWS can best serve our work. People can help us to improve the paper by giving us: 1) comments and criticisms of news stories, and 3) graphics (take your camera everywhere). It is essential that we have continuing feedback about the paper, not only from organizers, but also from GIs who receive it, and from people who are new to the work of the organization. Without such regular input we are not going to be able to develop GI NEWS into the type of paper we really want it to be: one that will meet the needs of our GI projects and that will help to move our work forward.

Toward the end of expanding our GI work and making it a central focus of organizational activity, we feel that the existence of the National GI Project as a "project" is no longer correct. We propose that it be ended as an official VVAW/WSO project. We do not see our GI work as a "project" of the organization but rather as part of our central organizational task. Dropping the NGIP would mean a formal recognition or acceptance of our responsibilities in the area of GI organizing; something that as much of the organization as possible would be taking up and not just as one of a number of various "projects" we may or may not be working on.

4A. If VVAW/WSO is to seriously take up and expand its work in GI organizing, we need a basic program to guide this work. At the Thanksgiving GI organizer's workshop 3 days were spent summarizing our collective experience in GI organizing, struggling around our politics and in developing a draft program to guide VVAW/WSO's GI work. The National Collective fully supports the draft program the majority of the GI workshop drew up and endorsed. We feel it is important for the organization to adopt this program as the broad outline for our GI work in the coming period. It is important that we not view the draft program being proposed as just so many demands we raise and then hold demonstrations on such and such a date. Rather the program develops WHY we are or should be doing GI organizing, HOW we should be organizing GIs, and then what our basic areas of work should be. If we view it as only a set of demands and a date for a demonstration we will have totally liquidated the real purpose of the program.

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

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1. Prison support work--National Prison Project: A full description and analysis of the prison work now going on, its history, and where we see it going is contained in the section on Prison Work in the NO Clarification Paper.

2. Political Defense Work: The "Political Defense Manual," which was to have been done for this meeting, is not completed; there are two reasons for this: first, we bit off more than we could chew in terms of the work of typing and reproducing the 20-150 pages of that manual which are already done (needing, for the most part, only minor corrections or additions). Second, some of the important sections of the manual are not yet done and in to the NO. The meeting of the Political Defense Workshop at the beginning of November was profitable in that we completed work on most of the sections which had already been written, and in coming up with guidelines for writing the work reports on particular trials or defense efforts which make up a vital part of the manual.

At the same time, around the country, we are seeing the growing need for an understanding of the politics and the practice of defense work. VVAW/WSO and the anti-imperialist movement is clearly under attack by the police--from Bob Hood, to Shea Stadium, to Cincinnati, to Denver, to multiple attacks in Milwaukee the pattern is the same. The police attempt to intimidate members of the organization through attacking them, and, at the same time, try to divert the work of VVAW/WSO through the time and energy wasted in trials, courtroom appearances, legal hassles, etc. This has been done consistently through filing "assault and battery on a police officer" charges after people have been attacked by the police.

There have been some important tactical lessons learned from these attacks: demonstrations or rallies must stay together rather than allow themselves to be split up into groups which the police can easily attack. In Shea Stadium, it was a small group separated from the larger group of chapter members who were brutally attacked by the police. In Cincinnati, it was a small picket line several days after a large militant demonstration. Another point is the need for tactical leadership, even for a small demonstration; tactical leadership must be strong, experienced, and capable--people have to know who to follow in a confrontation situation. Prior planning, with anticipation and planning for police attacks is essential; both attacks in Milwaukee came after the action was almost over and people let their guard down. The people can hold off police attacks and fight back effectively: the police and the system which uses them are attacking the organization and the movement in general because they are afraid--and they have every reason to be scared. A militant, unified, large demonstration is not something that the police want to deal with.

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Once the attack has taken place, however, and once charges are filed, a political defense is the only defense. The hassles and the trials can be turned from a bad thing into a good thing by organizing around them: the power of the masses of people can free political prisoners, and it is on the people, not the courts, that we have to rely. The fact that people in cars were trying to get out of these cars and help the Milwaukee people during the police attack on the courthouse steps, and were yelling about police brutality (note: the most recent police attack in Milwaukee took place at the end of a rally against police brutality; 25-30 demonstrators were attacked from two sides by police on the steps of the courthouse, in full view of a main Milwaukee street.) shows

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graphically what can be done through raising public awareness of whose interests police serve. Police brutality and repression are everyday occurrences in many sections of the country, particularly in minority communities; we have natural allies in building the fight against such repression and must continue to build and work with these allies.

In a number of places around the country, VVAW/WSO chapters are working in defense committees -- from the Riverside Political Prisoners Committee, to Attica, to Ray Mendoza (Milwaukee), to Antwyne Cauley (Chicago), John Yancey (Portsmouth), Tyron Guyton (Oakland), and James Hardy (Cincinnati). Most chapters have found that they are working in coalitions on these committees and that, though VVAW/WSO chapters have not organized the committees in most places, we have played important roles in them. We feel that this work is essential and must be continued. Not only does it involve us immediately in the struggle against racism and repression, but it also carries forward our work to fight all phases of imperialism -- it does make the fighter for one into the fighter for all. Work in these defense committees often gives us a strong involvement in our communities and an improved working relationship with other groups and organizations. If work on defense committees does not specifically build VVAW/WSO, it does build the overall movement against imperialism by showing that the people do have the power to unite against racism and repression, and win.

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Section G

WINTER SOLDIER

The newspaper, at this time, does not pay for itself. Almost the entire cost of the paper is paid from direct mail fundraising done for the national office. Income from chapters and regions does not meet the cost of the ink charge every month. As said in the Financial section, we will find it difficult to continue the paper if it does not begin to meet its own costs. We have been asking for 5¢ per copy ordered from us which is the basic cost of each copy. So far, no chapter or region pays this. Some method of money support must be developed by the organization or there may no longer be a national newspaper that can be sent out bulk to anybody who wants some. The NO is going to have to economize its costs of the paper. The first step would be the elimination of color in the paper, currently costing about \$110 per month. Second would be a reduction in the number of copies printed each month. Right now, we print 25,000 copies. This takes care of all the bulk shipments and the subscriptions and exchanges that are sent out from the NO. We have already drastically cut the number we send out from Chicago, almost halving the number of organizations that receive it from here.

One of the options that we have is to not send papers out until at least a partial payment is received from the previous month's shipment. This would mean that unless a region or chapter sent in some money, it would not get the next month's shipment. We think that this is a bad situation. The newspaper is for the national organization to use as a tool in its political work. It is the major link between all the chapters that provides cohesion in the organizational propaganda. The paper has played a leading role in pushing the work of the organization forward over the past year and a half. We do not think it should be lost because liberal support money is slowly drying

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Politics of the paper: The NO has always put forward that WINTER SOLDIER is not an alternative, anti-imperialist paper, but an organizational paper used for agitation and propaganda from an organizational perspective. We have also felt that it must play a leading role in pushing forward the work and politics of the organization and not passively try to reflect anti-imperialism. Therefore, it was inevitable that the paper would become part of the current struggle in the organization over the political future of VVAW/WSO. At times the paper has tried to straddle the fence and those issues have not been as well received as those issues that take up the struggle and implement a program.

The best example of this is the way the struggles of GIs is put forward in the paper. Here, struggles or incidents are covered that are not always national in scope. Many different aspects of GI struggles are on one or two pages, while most other articles have been one full page on one general subject. We think the rest of the paper should follow the form and content of the GI page, not dogmatically, but in a way that covers the scope of the struggles going on.

In this same vein, we think the paper must cover more VVAW/WSO activities. There has been a real problem in this area. One side of this is the NO's failure to actively seek input from chapters on their ongoing work for the paper instead of just demonstration reports and pictures of actions. On the other side, we need more thorough reports from chapters on campaigns being waged, especially those around the national program. We also need photos, as using pictures from past events with articles on current happenings is not good. These articles would be along the lines of the one that was on the DUP in Oakland and the ones on the Milwaukee actions.

Finally, we think that the methods and the content of criticism of the paper must be improved. Primarily, we think the paper should be analyzed on a political basis, whether it is pushing the work of the organization forward or if it is holding that work back, if it is helping mass work or not. We have received criticisms of the paper in the past, but most of these have lacked substance in terms of how the paper was received when selling it and comments by people who have received it on its content. Most criticisms have been just a statement that the paper is good or bad, but not the reasons why. We know there are disagreements on layout--borders, cartoons, color, etc.--but we feel these are not the crucial criticisms we must have to put out a solid organizational paper. If we do not have this kind of criticism, then the paper will not be as effective as it can be, and the same mistakes will be made again and again.

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The world is in great turmoil. Country after country, people are throwing off the yoke of imperialist domination and seizing control of their own destinies. The United States is being hurled into a deep crisis, the ruling class fights a losing battle to maintain control of the system as the system itself collapses under the weight of its own contradictions. As the crisis deepens, the imperialists are trying every method at their disposal to force it onto the backs of the working class, attacking living and working conditions, forcing speedups, throwing workers into unemployment, cutting back on social welfare programs, stirring up racial divisions and using open repression against the rising people's movement. Because of this crisis, the working class is on the rise, leading the fight against the attacks on them by the imperialists, and leading the way toward the overthrow of this bankrupt system.

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### Strategic Need to Build the Anti-Imperialist Veterans Movement

Veterans are also facing attacks from the ruling class. Because the majority of veterans are working-class people, they are facing the common contradictions that face the entire multi-national working class. At the same time, veterans are facing peculiar contradictions within the system of imperialism. The unemployment rate of veterans is higher than for the class as a whole. The services at the VA hospitals are deteriorating and cutbacks are being made in already understaffed situations. Bad discharges, job discrimination, lack of job training and layoffs have placed veterans squarely in the fight to smash imperialism.

It is the task of VVAW/WSO to build the mass anti-imperialist veterans movement, to lead up and lead the rising struggle of veterans around their immediate contradictions and show the way forward to smashing the system of imperialism in unity with the entire anti-imperialist movement. It is our task to not only raise the consciousness of veterans but to lead them in their fight, to point out the real enemy, to organize them in a revolutionary way and unite their struggle with the overall struggle against the system.

We think the struggles of veterans is potentially revolutionary. The ruling class has always, and many times successfully, tried to co-opt veterans, using various tricks and appeals to backward ideas to do this. It is the task of VVAW/WSO to convert the 'potential' to the real and not leave veterans to the wiles of the reactionaries. The imperialists have always been afraid of the men and women they have used to fight their wars, and rightfully so. We want to turn their fear into real terror by building a strong anti-imperialist veterans movement. Just appealing to veterans to 'repudiate their veterans' privileges' will not do this, nor do we want to see decent health care, decent education, decent jobs, and a decent life just as a special gift for veterans, but as a right of all working and oppressed people.

VVAW/WSO needs a fighting national program to meet this task. The program must identify the central or key demands of veterans, the central areas of attack, and provide the basis for consistent work so that the organization will lead the fight. Our program must direct the greatest blow possible and therefore must concentrate on how to mobilize veterans, not in a way that acts as a gimmick to sucker them into attacking the system, but in a way that clearly shows that only by smashing imperialism will their, and all working and oppressed peoples', needs be met. This means that our program has as its basis the taking up of the immediate oppression of veterans in concrete ways. The program is what we are offering the masses as a tool for defeating the system; meeting their demands; a plan of action for people to unite with and take up. The program cannot be just a series of demands by **CONFIDENTIAL** any demand can be reformist or revolutionary; and the program cannot be a series of dates isolated from day-to-day work.

## National Demands

At the Buffalo NSCM, VVAW/WSO adopted the current program. At the time, all that it encompassed was four demands and several dates for nationwide actions. We think this program has to be tightened up and fleshed out so that it will be more effective. Actions must still be held on the remaining dates, the next one being the second anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreements, January 27th. Every level of the organization should be mobilizing on those days. This program proposal is meant to deepen the work started by the Buffalo program, a means by which more programmatic unity can be developed and VVAW/WSO's blows against the system strengthened.

It is important to analyze the demands that form the core of the current national program. We think the four demands are sound in and of themselves, but that the way in which the demands are raised has become critical to seeing their realization. First, we do not think that every demand must be raised at every action, or that they are raised isolated from other demands. In differing conditions and in differing contexts, it may be necessary that one or more of the demands are not put forward. If unity with other groups can be made around just one demand, that is just as important to put forward as the other demands. Also, the target of an action may mean that one of the demands plays a more important role than the others at that time. Mainly, it is important to not be mechanistic in raising these demands.

We think that the demands are unfolded in a dialectical way, in a way that goes from the particular to the general. Understanding the nature of imperialism does not fall from the sky. It comes from engaging in struggle against the system. This leads to the question of how to build the movements around UNIVERSAL, UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY and IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENTS/END ALL AID TO THE U.S. AND LON NOL. We think the most successful way to win these demands, to build a real movement behind them, is to build the anti-imperialist veterans movement. This means that the key demand must be found to build that movement, the demand that unites with the immediate concerns of veterans that can be used to unfold the other demands.

We say that the key demand, at this time, is DECENT BENEFITS FOR ALL VETS. We say 'at this time' because the situation is rapidly changing and that this demand may no longer be key if the conditions change drastically, i. e., if the U.S. government should renew bombing in Vietnam. However, this demand is key at this time because it provides the way to develop the vets movement in a dialectical way. Veterans are pissed off at the VA and have a basic understanding that the VA is part of a wider system. By seriously taking up this demand, not as a gimmick but leading the fight to win it, we will show the masses that we mean serious business, that we are not just poverty pimps. It is clear from past practice that most vets do not immediately unite with the other three demands. Practice has shown that the amnesty demand can be brought forward very well from the demand for a single type of discharge. The demand around Indochina can be unfolded from the understanding of the amnesty question.

The main danger in the fight for DECENT BENEFITS is the right error of making it a demand separate from the rest of the working class and oppressed people, to make it purely an economist struggle. This means that it is being put forward in a reformist way not exposing imperialism, not directing the peoples' wrath at the system, and raising it in isolation from the overall struggle against the system. It is the task of the lackeys of the ruling class (VFW, American Legion, etc.) to channel the anger and just demands of

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vets into isolated pockets, isolating vets from their organizers and leaders and never exposing the system, never fighting it. On the contrary, we must lead the fight to do just the opposite. We must lead the fight to taking up UNIVERSAL, UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY, SINGLE TYPE DISCHARGE, and IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENTS/END ALL AID to joining the fight to smash imperialism.

Also, the demand around Indochina has certain weaknesses. The primary weakness is the failure to link the war in Indochina with the worldwide crisis of imperialism and the rising danger of inter-imperialist war. Particularly, we see the rising area of contention is the Middle East and that the situation there clearly has the potential for developing into world war for the control of Europe. The failure to point out that the crisis of imperialism can lead to a war for redivision of the imperialist areas of domination and tying that to the continued conflict in Indochina isolates what is happening in Indochina from the nature of the crisis. VVAW/WSO must take up this aspect more concretely. By doing so we will be more effective in bringing the demand around Indochina to the people.

It is also imperative that VVAW/WSO take up a new demand around the economic crisis in the United States. We believe a demand around jobs must be added to the national program. As much as the ruling class likes, it cannot undo the contradictions of the system. Overproduction and inflation have forced the imperialists to take measures to safeguard their rates of profit. Fundamental to their attack on the working class is massive unemployment. Among the unemployed, veterans are some of the first laid off, particularly because they have no job seniority. Already the ruling class is scurrying around trying to defuse the question of jobs with "public" employment programs. The organization must join with other forces that are organizing for jobs and bring unemployed vets into the struggle. Changing conditions and determining which is the key demand could very well make this demand the key one in the near future.

While the national organization will be putting forward five demands (under this program conditions at the local level will necessitate the raising of other demands. Particular conditions in each area dictate how national demands are organized around and at the same time, particular conditions means raising demands that the rest of the organization may not raise. For example, some chapters have raised a demand around bi-lingual forms at the VA because in their areas there are large numbers of Latino vets in need of these kinds of forms. Also, supporting the demands of other organizations or struggles is a key element in not isolating the anti-imperialist vets movement from the overall struggle. An example of this is working on the Tyrone Guyton Committee in the Bay Area, where VVAW/WSO plays an important role in developing the campaign against police murders and brutality. Another is the support organized for the Puerto Rican Independence Day celebration in New York.

The question of national oppression and VVAW/WSO's approach to it is a key link in building an anti-imperialist veterans movement. There is a sound material basis for uniting Third World and white vets in VVAW/WSO. The road to this unity is for the organization to take up the fight against national oppression and show the masses that we mean it when we demand an end to racism and oppression. At the same time, by winning over Third World vets to the common struggle, that is, fighting for the same demands that all people are fighting around, is the solid foundation of multi-national unity. Some chapters have had the beginning of multi-national unity around attacking the VA, a step which we feel is the best possible way for VVAW/WSO to become truly multi-national.

The practice VVAW/WSO has had around the oppression of women has been somewhat more consistent than that around national oppression, but we have still not programmatically taken up this aspect of combatting imperialism. Within the struggle of building the

anti-imperialist veterans movement we must investigate the conditions that women vets face as well as the problems that face families of veterans. This question is more clear in terms of GI work, but there are women vets and families of vets that can be organized around the national program. Not seeing the veterans movement as separate from the rest of the anti-imperialist movement, the organization should link up with progressive women's struggles going on and actively support them, as in the case of the Farah strike

### Campaign Around the Conditions of Veterans

The most important part of our program must be to actively see where vets are and then go out to them, not wait for them to come to us. We think the key to this is an active campaign attacking the entire VA system-- the hospitals, administrative offices, drug programs, job training programs, GI Bill, vet reps on campuses, community vet programs, federally funded rip-offs, and poverty pimps. To make it more clear, the following is a listing of what we see as targets in this campaign:

1. VA Hospitals.
2. VA Administrative offices.
3. Unemployment Centers.
4. Vocational Training Centers.
5. Colleges.
6. Discharges.
7. Community programs (drugs, home loans, job fairs).
8. National Guard and Reserves.

A campaign around the entire VA system is many-sided and can attack from all or any of those sides. The list of targets covers every condition or local situation so that all chapters can be engaged in this campaign. Where there are several such targets, and where conditions in the chapter permit, the campaign can be developed around as many of the targets as possible.

One of the prime targets is the VA hospital system. This system, the largest of all hospital systems, concentrates all the aspects of the contradictions that vets now face. It is also the place where vets can be most easily found and approached on a consistent basis. The majority of vets already realize that the VA stinks. The hassles, poor treatment, discrimination, red tape and so forth are well known by the masses of veterans. VVAW/WSO must go into the VA and actively organize in the hospital, working with the patients, uniting with the VA workers, and doing work with the outpatients around the conditions of the VA and bring these people into the anti-imperialist struggle. We cannot lay out here the details of how this can be done, but there are many chapters completing a campaign against the VA, and their summations provide an excellent basis for waging this campaign. Along with the VA hospitals are the VA Administrative Offices (Regional VAs) that sometimes exist in a hospital and sometimes not. These offices are filled with career bureaucrats and an even larger number of honest people who think they are helping vets. It is vital to reach these honest workers and get them to support our campaign. Also, there is a large daily influx of vets to these offices trying to clear up their benefits from red tape or some other conditions (like a bad discharge). Although these vets are not there every day, they can be mobilized.

The rising problem of unemployment is also part of the campaign. If size of membership permits, work should begin around unemployment centers. There are many vets there with bad discharges also, and can be moved around the SINGLE TYPE DISCHARGE. There are lots of vets who have been laid off due to lack of seniority. Along with unemployment centers go the vocational training centers where vets are given six months (or less) job training, only to have no job waiting. There is an increasing number of vets at these places, some of them having special days just for vets to come on. If work is done around these centers, it must be consistent or nothing will come of it. There are



So other groups doing movement work and they should be investigated to see what kind of unity could be achieved with ~~them~~ joint work.

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Some chapters exist around campus situations. Although investigation must be done as to what is foremost on these campuses, much work can be done around the GI Bill. Also, many campuses have a VA representative on campus, and these reps can be attacked or used as a focus for the campaign against the VA, particularly if there is no other VA facility in town. This also raises the question of where vets go for help when there is no VA facility in a town. We have had no input in this area and think it should be looked into to see if vets are having difficulty because of this situation.

Work on bad discharges has been going on for some time, but there has been little growth in a movement for single type discharge. We think this is because there has been no program to plug vets with LTDs into after getting hold of them. Linking them with the campaign around the fact that they can't get jobs and that the VA will not help them will move this demand forward. Raising the demand for a SINGLE TYPE DISCHARGE at the VA and demanding that treatment be given regardless of discharge status is important, bringing out the real nature of discharges and winning those people who are eligible for treatment to supporting this demand.

The VA has many fingers out in the community that affect what is happening to vets. Many drug programs get funds from the VA to keep people hooked on methadone. Many vets are angry about their inability to get loan for purchasing homes, as pointed out by the incident that happened in Chicago (in the January WS) at a meeting called by the city for vets. These fingers can be traced out and work done around them. If this work is plugged into a larger campaign, then it is more effective, as the meetings that the city or VA call never provide real answers to the questions the vets raise to them. Providing these angry people with a way to fight back is crucial.

Finally, there is the work around the National Guard and Reserves. This is covered more thoroughly in the program on GIs. Briefly, VVAW/WSO must take up the task of stemming the ability of the ruling class to use the National Guard and Reserves for domestic repression. The Guard will most assuredly be used in the near future to attack the people's movement, and work must be done to neutralize or turn this around. We think this work should be done on the basis of either having already established an attack on the VA or if there are no other aspects of the program that can be implemented in an area. This is because there must be a base from which to approach Guardsmen and Reservists and an anti-imperialist mass movement is such a base.

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Methods of Work

It is important to draw the lessons of the past in taking up this program. The major weakness of implementing any program, and the weakness that has characterized the work in the last four months, is the lack of consistency. Just choosing the VA system as the point of attack does not automatically lead to success in organizing. Also, holding any number of demonstrations at one place is not the essential part. It is constantly being out there among the people, learning from them and what they see as the primary contradictions, going to them and bringing our organizational strength to their struggles that is essential. An example of this is in the Wisconsin report. They picked one ward of one VA hospital and started going there on a consistent basis. They talked with patients, organized support among the VA workers, started a study group and organized. This has led to growing support from the patients and the VA workers, with these forces coming to demonstrations the chapter has called, and patients joining the chapter. This wouldn't have happened if the chapter had not gone into the ward consistently.

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By picking out the key conditions that people face and conducting thorough investigations of these conditions, we will be better able to lead the fight of vets against the system. One of the problems of the past period has been the hit-or-miss method of trying to educate and mobilize people in the struggle. We call this the "butterfly syndrome," flitting from one building or target to the next, thinking that one or two demos has moved the people at these places forward. We do not think that any such thing happens using this method of work. A few people who are already anti-imperialist may come forward, but without consistent work, the masses are ignored.

Besides consistency, it was pointed out earlier that mobilizing vets around the key demand of "Decent Benefits" will lead to a related movement around the other demands on amnesty and Indochina. It has been said by many chapters that people, especially vets, do not relate to the amnesty demand or the Indochina demand when first approached. This is very understandable, since anti-imperialist consciousness does not come out of the sky. People must be won to it. By uniting with and leading the struggle around demands that veterans immediately grasp are in their interests provides the material basis for explaining the other demands and winning their support of them, not the other way around. This will not happen if the fight around the immediate needs is conducted in an economist or reformist way, never attacking the system or bringing out the system's true nature.

Equally important is trying to link up the independent vets groups that exist by the hundreds across the country. The basis for uniting with them should be around programmatic unity, not ideological unity at first. What we are trying to do is win them to the fight against the system, not leave them to it. This may mean that only one demand can be fought around. If this is the case, that demand must be used as a springboard to the other demands and the struggle against the system as a whole. The key here is to maintain an independent stance politically while uniting programmatically.

Finally, the campaign around the conditions that vets face is not isolated from the overall anti-imperialist movement. As pointed out earlier, it is imperative that our program be linked with the work of other progressive forces so that veterans are brought into the anti-imperialist struggle and not isolated from it. This program is aimed at mobilizing veterans, but it is also the framework around which the system can be unfolded.

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