



# INSIDE / OUT

## Same Struggle, Same Fight

### No.15 VVAW Newsletter for Prisoners Mar 76

Militant Greetings!

As for the last couple of issues, this issue of The Veteran and "Inside/Out" is not getting to you as quickly as we would like. The reasons haven't changed--we can only get the paper printed when we have the money, and there just aren't enough people working on the paper to get it out any more promptly. But that's because people who could otherwise be writing articles for the paper are in fact out on the streets, on the campuses, in the VA offices, around the unemployment lines (and often in them), building the fighting vets movement. And that's exactly as it should be.

Much of that work right now is aimed toward a Bicentennial Demonstration to be held in Philadelphia on the 1st through the 4th of July (that's the time and the place where the people who run this country, as well as all their favorite politicians and mouth-pieces will be). The Demonstration is being built around the slogan, "WE'VE CARRIED THE RICH FOR 200 YEARS--LET'S GET THEM OFF OUR BACKS." Some of us have recently returned from a conference held in Cincinnati for people who are also building the demonstration, and one of the features of that conference was a chance for some of the people who were there to tell us why they saw the need to "get them off our backs." An older woman talked about the factory she had worked in until the bosses picked it up and moved it to Taiwan (where they could pay a worker a weekly wage equal to what this worker made in a day) along with all the jobs and the workers' pensions. A young person from Detroit talked about how he and his friends were faced with the choice of stealing, working for almost nothing, or going into the military. A coal miner from West Virginia talked about the militant wildcat strikes against conditions in the mines. A disabled vet talked about the way he was mistreated in a VA hospital. And all of these were individual reasons why we should get them off our backs.

Another individual story appears in this issue of The Veteran--the story of a Vietnam vet in prison in California. The ruling class sent him off to fight for them in Vietnam and now that he needs help, they are trying to sweep his problems under the nearest rug. Like all of us, he has plenty of reason why we should get those rich bastards off our backs. The Bicentennial Demonstration will include thousands of people with thousands of reasons, uniting around the two major and blatant sores in the capitalist system--unemployment and the danger of war. We would like to hear your comments so that we can help to take your reasons for getting them off our backs to Philadelphia in July.

# **We've Carried the Rich for 200 Years Let's Get Them Off Our Backs!**



## **Let's Stand Up And Fight!**

1976--Millions walking the streets looking for jobs and still more shoved out the door while plants close down. Those still at work, worked to death, chained to the bosses' machinery. Our cities falling apart. Our schools, hospitals and firehouses shut down. Half finished construction sites standing next to banded out tenements and the drums of another war beating louder. All this amidst lies of recovery and the fireworks of celebration.

No! This is not what we worked so hard for. No, this is not the future we want for our children. One thousand outrages slap us in the face. No, we can't live like this. And we won't.

Our class, the working class, men and women of all nationalities--we build and we produce. But their class, the capitalist class, takes it all. They own what

they have never built--the mills, mines and banks. Owning all, they take all we produce. And for us, only enough to keep us alive so we can slave for them some more.

They take our hard work and twist it. We work together. They steal, each as much for himself as he can, and try to keep us apart. Everything has a price for them. Their uncontrollable drive for profit makes this whole society run like it does. Crisis after crisis, war after war, injustice upon injustice. Ten generations of profits bled out of ten generations of our lives.

Our whole history proves this. We have fought for all that is worthwhile in this country. We are not animals but that's how they would have us live. No! Not in 1776, 1876, or 1976. Our history is filled with storms of resistance, battling back and standing tall. We are men and women. We will not be slaves. We are the backbone of the whole country, millions strong. They are a handful of murderers and slavedrivers, rotting even as they calw to grab more.

1976. These thieves call all of us to celebrate with them. National unity... all together and many happy returns. No! We shall not celebrate their rule. Despite all their sickening lies and broken-record hoopla, we have nothing in common with them. For them--200 years of plunder. For us--200 years of slavery and oppression. All they have they took from us. All we need we have wrenched from them through bitter battle. It is they and their never-satisfied thirst for profit that stand between us and our fight for a better life and a brighter future for our children.

Fellow workers! Today as before our class battles every last abuse--on picketlines and shop floors, in neighborhood and communities and everywhere throughout society. Our fight is a just fight, our demands are just demands. In building this struggle on July 4th in Philadelphia, we will proclaim expecially our demand for "Jobs or Income Now!" and determination that "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War!"

We have the strength to mobilize. We have the ability to unite all the battles, all the people, all the anger at the way we have to live. The future belongs to us. We are the only ones who can push things forward, and we are determined to break through.

Now is the time to pull it together. All our forces. All our battles. As we have always fought them we will fight them on the day they choose to celebrate their bloodsoaked rule. We will come together, thousands strong, to expose their crimes and build our movement, on that day and for the great battles ahead.

On to Philadelphia!

We've carried the rich for 200 years, let's get them off our backs!

**Demonstrate in Philadelphia, July 4th!**

**July 4th Coalition**

Initiated by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee, Revolutionary Communist Party and Revolutionary Student Brigade.

"On Changing Your Mind"

The following article comes from a brother who, at the time he wrote it, was imprisoned in McAlester in Oklahoma; since that time he has left the prison without observing all the regulations which go along with parole, etc. The article was printed in "Inside Out" once before--December, 1974--and is a true today as it was then. Although the examples are taken from prisoners at Big Mac, similar experiences are part of every prison population.

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Did you ever look around you and wonder why practically all your fellow convicts were poor people? Did you ever notice how few well-educated people are doing time? Did it ever strike you as rather odd that the numbers of non-whites doing time far exceeds the ratio of white to non-white in the general population? Did you know that of the 1.2 million criminal offenders handled each day by some part of the US correctional system, 80% are members of the lowest 12% income group or Black and poor?

Many people who become aware of these facts reason it away something like this: "Yes, it's true that America's prisons are filled with the children of the poor, but that is because poor people are the only ones who have a need to commit crimes. Why would a rich man steal anything"?

So, with this kind of fuzzy logic in your head, you plod along doing your time. You feel you deserve to be in prison because you broke the law and get caught. You think that the authority that keeps you here is legitimate, so you condemn yourself for not having the education, or the ambition, or the aggressiveness, or the fortitude, or the intelligence, or whatever your particular real or imagined shortcomings might be, to have been successful in the big, happy "free world."

Have you ever wondered why a few Americans sit in a position of power, privilege and luxury, while you and the masses of working people spend your life laboring to make ends meet? Did it ever occur to you that perhaps the institution of prisons is a tool of class and/or ethnic oppression? That means that it might be used by the rich folks to make the poor, uneducated, non-white folks go along with a status quo of deprivation, indignity, injustice. Did you know that criminal law is essentially a reflection of the values, and a codification of the self-interest, and a method of control of the dominant class. That means that the oppressor uses criminal law to make the oppressed adopt his values and protect his interests even though in order to do so, the poor folks must work against their own class interests.

Did you know that the rich and powerful steal more money and commit more crimes than all the prisoners in all the prisons in this nation? One of my best friends was charged with 2nd degree burglary and here he sits, sentenced to 70 years. According to the President's Crime Commission Report, price-fixing by 29 electrical equipment companies cost the public more money than all the burglaries put together in a year. Corporate and business crime goes largely unreported and the instances that are reported are almost never prosecuted. That's because they represent the upper class: the upper class is the guys who make the laws. Would you have any trouble believing that "my" President and his gang have ripped-off the working class in America for more millions than most of us will ever even think about in our lives, but Nixon will never know what it is like to be locked in a prison cell over-

night. He represents the guys who administer the law.

I know a certain wizard who stabbed a guy who was trying to kill him with a tire iron. The guy died and here sits wizard with a 35-year sentence. Compare that with a millionaire New York slumlord whose elevator--after being cited 6 times for dangerous mechanical malfunctions--crashed to the ground killing 4 people. He was fined \$12 for failure to cease operation of a dangerous public conveyance. Or the Blacksville #1 Coal Mine which has been sealed making it the tomb of 9 miners. (The murder of the miners recently in Kentucky where the company went ahead with work in a mine declared unsafe in order to squeeze out a few more profits is a more current example.) Or the Sunshine Mining Company in Kellog, Idaho, where 91 silver miners perished in a fire. They had been cited for 14 fire and safety violations over the past 21 months. Or consider Lockheed Shipbuilding and Construction Co which was accused by the Department of Labor of willful negligence in a San Fernando tunnel explosion that killed 17 men. You can be sure that nobody will ever know the wizard's torments of prison for these 117 murders.

I have a friend serving 10 years for aggravated assault resulting from a bar-room brawl. The annual figure on "aggravated assault" is around 200,000. In New Horizons in Criminology, Barnes & Teeters report that from 8-15 % of all food consumed in this country is contaminated and that each year, more than 3 million people are made "seriously ill" as a result of eating tainted or doctored food. This act of aggravated assault committed by the food industry against the working class goes unpunished. Robbery by the food industry through deceptive packaging, Madison Avenue copywriters, whose job it is to manipulate the gullible public into buying cancer-producing cigarettes and shoddy merchandise, doctors getting rich off medicare who process old people like so many cattle being driven to the slaughterhouse, greedy "businessmen" who pollute the rivers and the very air we breathe. These crimes cause infinitely more deaths and suffering than working class crimes, and yet the rich and powerful who commit them are awarded all the honors, status, and privilege that the society has to offer--while we lay rotting in 5' x 8' sealed-tomb tiger cages, denied fresh air, sunshine and exercise and denied even the most basic constitutional rights that society pretends belong to all of its citizens.

Envision a prison system populated primarily by the white middle and upper class, convicted of crimes that are peculiar to the affluent: price-fixing, purchase and sale of political influence, product adulteration, industrial pollution, criminal neglect of safety standards, fraudulent stock manipulations, manufacturing of unsafe death-dealing cars, violation of the minimum wage laws. That this notion seems like the wildest flight of fancy is already a commentary of the class character of the prison system.

The criminal justice system functions not only to put some law breakers behind bars, but to keep others out. The white, middle-class offender, social and class equal of the judge, will be let off lightly. Most judges justify the minimal sentences they give to "businessmen"-criminals--fines, probation or exceedingly short jail terms--on the ground that when such a man is convicted, he generally loses his job, his standing in the community, and his family's respect. The poorer and darker the convicted defendant, the heavier will be his/her punishment. His job, his standing in the community, his family's respect weigh lightly in the scales of justice as manipulated by the judges.



Membership in the category "lawbreaker" is not distributed according to economic or social status, but membership in the category "criminal" is distributed according to class. The only kind of crime available to poor people (theft, robbery, purse-snatching, mugging) is the kind of crime that we are all conditioned to view as deserving of punishment. Our minds have been so corrupted by the education system and the religious and ethical conditioning that many are unable to realize that your friendly neighborhood banker, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Deacon of your church, may be far more successful criminals than you are. Everybody knows that the President of the United States is a master criminal, but how many of you can see that he is just a front man tool for such gangsters as Howard Hughes, J. Paul Getty, Aristotle Onassis, to name but a few. A cogent argument has been made that Billy Graham is the greatest social criminal of all time. What did he say??? Don't worry if you're having healthy paranoid suspicions. They always accompany the demystification of oppression.

It might be time for you to consider the fact that this whole trip is illegitimate: the prison with its sick and inhuman administration, the economic system that exploits and degrades the many and is fixed in favor of the few, the attitude that you are a miserable sinner who has sinned against society and now must pay your just due.

In World War II, as in other wars, there were many prisoners of war who escaped from their captors simply because they did not accept the legitimacy of the authority that held them captive. The human mind is a powerful tool. If all of us refused to accept this prison as our just penalty; if we all looked upon our keepers with the righteous contempt which they deserve; if we all became reality disrupting influences by throwing alternative symbolic universe sand in their legitimization ball-bearings, they would soon be unable to do their trip. I'm not suggesting that we attack a tank with a stick. I'm telling you to change your mind. I'm telling you to become politically aware. I'm telling you to feed your head and seek liberation from the prison of your own mind.

(The following letter comes from a prisoner in Illinois and is addressed to inmates everywhere.)

Many of us in prisons throughout this country are being exploited each and every day of the year. WHY? The answer is quite simple. YOU are allowing it to happen! You sit back and allow the Administrations to do as they want. You sit in your cell and read cock books and shoot-em-ups instead of reading current law books, revolutionary materials and other articles that can help you overcome this daily oppression....

WHY? .... All this can be stopped if you'll take the necessary time to look into avenues of escape. The Federal Court system has a policy of great understanding when it receives complaints from incarcerated inmates. From personal experience (I now have several suits in litigation) this convict can truthfully say that he has received very good treatment in every instance of legal matters he had filed.

You don't have to be a highly trained attorney to file a suit over the issues of constitutional violations. There are many inmates who have a working knowledge of law, and they should be ready to help any other con get his action into the courts. If you present good issues and can prove your allegations, then get it in the courts! Don't waste your time or the courts with a lot of crap that you can't prove. The burden of proof is on you to prove anything you allege. Once you have withstood all the motions for dismissal and other motions that the defendants will file against your action, then the tide starts to turn whereby they will have to start proving that they aren't guilty of what you allege....

If you like being screwed over then keep on with your talk about all them whores you had out on the streets and those long Cadillacs you had. I'm pretty sure the people who run these places want you to do exactly as you are now. Myself, I'm going to keep on fighting these bastards till they finally get tired of answering the door for all the summons they get from me. I'll bet I get action before you do!!!

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We believe this letter makes a crucially important point but also makes a critical mistake. Just looking at the history of the United States for the past 200 years demonstrates that poor and working people have gotten nothing without fighting for it--the 8 hour day, the right to unionize, vets benefits, unemployment compensation, an end to slavery; the list goes on and on, and not one of these gains came as a "gift" from the people who run the country. We fought to get them and we're fighting now in order to keep them. When the writer of the letter printed above says that prisoners have to resist in whatever way possible he is absolutely right. And the courts are one way that resistance can be carried on.

But, if we say that we can rely on the courts, or that they are the only way in which we can fight, we're making a big mistake. Courts, like police or the military or the prison system are there to maintain the rule of the wealthy few over the millions of the rest of us. When it comes down to a serious question of class in-

terests, the courts are always going to go with the class they were built to serve--the rich, the ruling class. In the long run, there's only one place that we can put our reliance, and that is on ourselves and on our ability to organize others with the same problems we have to fight for our rights and needs.

### GI Bill Benefits

There have been a number of letters in the past couple of months asking questions about the GI Bill and what benefits vets in prison can get under that Bill. This is an attempt to lay out some of the major provisions of that Bill for those vets who can make use of it.

The GI Bill is available to any veteran with an honorable discharge; vets with general discharges (under honorable circumstances) also qualify. An undesirable discharge may qualify--that is determined by the regional VA office. Vets who served for 180 or more days on active duty qualify for 48 months of educational benefits. These benefits must be used within 10 years of date of discharge from active duty (this 10 years of eligibility is being attacked--Ford's budget message to Congress proposes that it be cut to 8 years).

There's a wide range of educational programs and courses which are officially covered under the GI Bill. Public or private secondary schools, vocational schools, business school, junior college, correspondence school--all of these are covered; so are some apprenticeship courses and on-the-job training courses. There are different allowances for full-time study, 3/4's time, 1/2 time, etc. For instance, for secondary school, 25 hours per week of instruction is considered full time; 18-24 hours per week is 3/4's time; 12-17 hours per week is 1/2 time. Full time allowances for a vet with no dependents is \$270 per month; with one dependent, it's \$321 per month.

Of course, there are dozens of petty regulations and restrictions (some of these are covered in the article in The Veteran concerning the GI Bill) and there are plans for more. It's to the advantage of the VA and the government to have so much red tape, so much bureaucracy, and so much harassment that vets won't even try to get their benefits. Any place where the US owning class of people can squeeze a few more bucks out of people or where they can save a couple of dollars by vets not getting their benefits, they are going to try to do it. But many vets know where the GI Bill came from when it was started: from the militant struggle of vets and from the fact that the US rulers had a need for more and more educated people to work in their factories and plants. Because of their economic crisis they no longer need as many people with education so they try to cut back. No way! Vets fought to get the Bill 30 years ago and vets will fight to keep it and to extend and expand the GI Bill today.

A study done by the Government Accounting Office a couple of years ago found that of those vets interviewed, 81.3 % of the vets in prison had never been advised of their entitlement to vets benefits. Fifty-three % thought they had lost their rights to benefits because they were in prison. Not true--if a vet meets the qualifications for the GI Bill, it makes no difference if he or she is in prison. Fight for your rights; and let us know if we can help!