

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



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



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## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### GENERAL

#### 1. The World Situation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2: The Situation in the US

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



#### 4. The Oppression of GIs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

III. POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE METHODS OF OUR GI WORK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### The Role of Third World GIs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

discrimination hits Third World GIs especially hard since the opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### Women in the Military

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

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

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

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

### Question of Homosexuality

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUDING NOTES--INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM--

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

What would the goals of such a program be?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

thing, as mentioned above, is that the program  
leads to an understanding of the necessity to change certain things  
military--to an understanding of the necessity to abolish  
itself.

DRAFT PROGRAM FOR VVAW/WSO's GI ORGANIZING

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

1. The Domestic Use of GIs Against the Working Class

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

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

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

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

## 2. National Oppression

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

### The Oppression of Women in the Military

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2) HEALTH CARE:

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

### 3) JOB DISCRIMINATION:

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

### 4.) MALE SUPREMACY IN THE MILITARY:

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

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

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

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

#### 4 UCMJ STRUGGLES

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

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

siderably hamper the power of the military.

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

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

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

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

### 5. Working & Living Conditions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

#### 6. Struggles for Democratic Rights

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

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

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

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

7. Single-Type Discharge

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

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

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

8. Struggle to end all imperialist wars of aggression

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

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

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

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

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

#### 9. UNIVERSAL & UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY

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

## VII. CAMPAIGN PROPOSAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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