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**VIETNAM
VETERANS,
their WIVES,
their FAMILIES,
GATHER IN WASHINGTON
May 22nd through 24th**

**TO DEMAND,
WITH DIGNITY AND SELF RESPECT,
THAT AMERICA HONOR ITS PROMISE
TO CARE FOR THOSE HARMED IN WAR.**

For information call (414) 963-0398.

FRIDAY, May 22, HIGH NOON: Picket the VA Central Office at 810 Vermont Avenue. March past the White House and rally in Lafayette Park at 2:00 PM. We demand the VA be present at the National Agent Orange Conference and end the cuts.

SATURDAY, May 23, 9:00 AM: Agent Orange Conference sponsored by the National Veterans Task Force on Agent Orange will be held at American University.

SUNDAY, May 24, 4:00 PM (or after the Conference is over): Wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery as memorial to Agent Orange victims.

MONDAY, May 25, 9:00 AM: March from the Washington Monument to Arlington Cemetery, where the traditional Memorial Day ceremony will be at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is not certain whether there will be a permit needed, or what kind of security the Reagan forces will have. . . . **HONOR THE DEAD!! FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING!!!**

IN THE PLANNING: Possible campout at the Washington Monument.

SPONSORED BY: Vietnam Veterans Against the War; National Association of Black Veterans; New Jersey Victims of Agent Orange; Vietnam Veterans Still Suffering; Local 360 Mail Handlers Union AFL-CIO; American Postal Workers Union; AFL-CIO Local O'Hara Midway.

We need help to organize, and money! Milwaukee: (414) 963-0398 or 562-8387; Chicago: (312) 989-4684; Madison: (608) 257-1200; New Jersey: (201) 264-9230.

National Veterans Task Force

On Agent Orange

National Office
P.O. Box 15972
Saint Louis, Missouri 63114
(314) 428-0113

Dear Friends,

In the last three years, we have all watched the Agent Orange issue unfold before us. It has raised a great many unanswered questions; and we have all seen that, most frequently, veterans and our families have had more answers than anyone, including the chemical companies and the government.

When nearly 3 million of us may be at risk from one of the most toxic substances ever made by man, we ask why the government fails to strain its every resource to help us? This country should do so much more to seek its very best physicians, its very best medical researchers, its very best legislative experts, to resolve the Agent Orange issue. But this job has been left to us, the veterans and our families.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you and your family members to a national conference on Agent Orange planned for Saturday, May 23, and Sunday, May 24, 1981, at American University in Washington DC. Veterans and their families there will sponsor the first National Vietnam Veterans Conference on Agent Orange. The conference will address political organizing, treatment, current scientific evidence, legal and legislative developments, and government policy under the new administration. (See enclosed brochure.) Inexpensive food and lodging (even camping sites) are being arranged.

OTHER VIETNAM VETERAN EVENTS: Vietnam Veterans, their wives and family members are caravanning, bussing, carpooling to Washington DC on the weekend of our conference for other reasons too. President Reagan's approach to helping Vietnam Veterans - eliminating all of the few programs designed to help us, is fueling a major effort to get veterans to Washington DC for public gatherings on May 22, 1981. Such gatherings are, of course, aimed at confronting the administration's choice of priorities. For further information, see attached information.

For the folks in St. Louis metro area, I will be out of town for the next two months for the conference. If you would be interested in attending the conference and would like to travel together, please call:

(314) 595-4294
(Before 1:00 PM)

(314) 838-3747
(After 6 PM)

(314) 741-7430
(After 6 PM)

The Vietnam experience divided this country and its people during the war. For us veterans, the Vietnam experience allowed our country to place our lives at risk and abandon us. We must NOT allow our country to place us at risk and abandon us again. I hope that you will join us in Washington DC in an effort to have our questions about Agent Orange answered and begin to organize and demand simple justice by veterans and their families for veterans and their families. We can no longer wait for the government to help us. We must organize now on a national level to help ourselves.

NOW IS THE TIME TO COME TO WASHINGTON DC

The Conference will be in the Ward Circle Building/American University, Nebraska & Massachusetts Avenues N.W. If you are flying in, fly to National Airport, if possible. All buses lead to American University.

Accomodations

Immoral Price:

Quality Inn
1315 16th Street N.W.
(202) 232-8000

Moral Price:

1440 Hotel
1440 Rhode Island Avenue N.W.
(202) 232-7800

Registration Necessary

Presidential Hotel
900 19th Street N.W.
(202) 331-9020

Registration Necessary

St. Charles Hotel
1731 New Hampshire Avenue N.W.
(202) 332-2226

Registration Necessary

Harrington Hotel
11 and E Street N.W.
(202) 628-8140

Registration Necessary

The Connecticut-Woodley Tourist Home
2647 Woodley N.W.
(202) 667-0218

Registration Very Necessary

International Youth Hotel
1332 I Street N.W.
(202) 347-3125

Registration Very Necessary

Special Deal: (sleeping bags)

St. Steven's Church
16 and Newton N.W.
(202) 265-0142
(call between 9:00 A.M. & 3:00 P.M.)

Money must be paid by
May 20, 1981.

Floor space for people with sleeping bags or bed rolls and bath towels. For each reasonably sized group the charge is \$25.00 per night. It can be a group of 2, 5, 10 or 50, the fee is still \$25.00 for the group. You have to be out by 7 A.M. Sunday.

Ruth M. Schaeffer
Conference Chairperson
Office of Veteran Affairs/CUNY
535 East 80th Street (Caldwell)
New York, N.Y. 10021

The National Veterans Task Force on Agent Orange

with the Interreligious Working
Group for the Vietnam Generation
Ministries of the National Council
of Churches and the National
Veterans Law Center announce a

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS CONFERENCE ON AGENT ORANGE

A working conference for
veterans and concerned others to
unite efforts toward the develop-
ment of viable resources to meet
the needs of Agent Orange victims.

May 22-24, 1981
American University
Washington, D.C.

AGENT ORANGE:

ARE WE PREPARED TO MOVE FORWARD TO HELP THOSE WHO SUFFER?

The National Veterans Task Force on Agent Orange is a growing non-profit coalition of veteran, religious, legal, social service, and environmental groups. The current 25 member groups have united to seek assistance for the ever increasing number of people experiencing ill health since being in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The coalition's birth resulted from the efforts of the National Council of Churches and the National Association of Concerned Veterans.

A scientific panel, under the direction of Drs. Steven and Jeanne Stellman, provides scientific and medical advice to member groups.

Legal council for the Task Force is provided by one of its member groups, the National Veterans Law Center in Washington, D.C.

GOALS

- To assess the latest information available on Agent Orange.
- To plan action based upon the information from the conference.
- To help veterans and others organize and work together to impact national policy.
- To work toward better health care and compensation for veterans.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Pre-registration (by check or money order to National Veterans Task Force).

Veteran or family member-\$10.00
Support/advocacy member-\$20.00
Professional/friend-\$40.00

Pre-registration ends May 11, 1981 and does not include lodging or meals.

There will be a \$5.00 additional charge for people registering at the conference.

Return attached registration form as soon as possible.

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

last name		first name middle initial		Status ☐ Veteran/family ☐ support/advocacy member ☐ professional/friend
street or RD#		apt. #		☐ I have enclosed pre-registration fee
city	state	zip	telephone #	☐ I am pre-registering & will pay at the door
organization (if applicable)		title		☐ I would appreciate child care
Lodging ☐ I am interested in dorm space				My primary interest is _____
☐ Friday \$15/night (enclose check)				
☐ Saturday				
☐ I will arrange my own lodging				

PROGRAM*

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS CONFERENCE ON AGENT ORANGE

Friday, May 22

5:00 - 10:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION

Pre-registered persons pick up registration materials. Those who are not pre-paid pay at this time. Organizations set up display materials at their booths. Presenters, committees and groups meet to organize.

Saturday, May 23

9:00 - 9:15 a.m.

WELCOME

Jon Furst, National Veterans Task Force on Agent Orange

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

PLENARY I: Present State of Affairs for Agent Orange Victims

10:45 - 11:45 a.m.

SMALL GROUP WORKSHOPS

Individual and Task Force goals for conference

Noon - 1:00 p.m.

LUNCHEON

Speakers: Representatives of Veterans Organizations

1:30 - 2:15 p.m.

PLENARY II: Medical/Scientific Overview

2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

SMALL GROUP WORKSHOPS

Medical and scientific aspects of Agent Orange exposure

3:45 - 4:45 p.m.

PLENARY III: Legal/Legislative Overview

4:45 - 6:15 p.m.

PLENARY IV: Policy Implications of Legal/Scientific

Information - Panel of lawyers, scientists and veterans

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

DINNER

Speakers: Representatives of veterans organizations

9:15 p.m. - ?

WORKSHOP COMMITTEE MEETINGS: Discussion of Proposals

Sunday, May 24

9:00 - 9:15 a.m.

OPENING REMARKS

9:15 - 10:15 a.m.

PLENARY V: Keynote Address

10:30 - 11:45 a.m.

SMALL GROUP WORKSHOP

Organizing locally for change

Noon - 1:00 p.m.

LUNCHEON

Speaker: Community Organizer

1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

PLENARY VI: Impacting National Policy

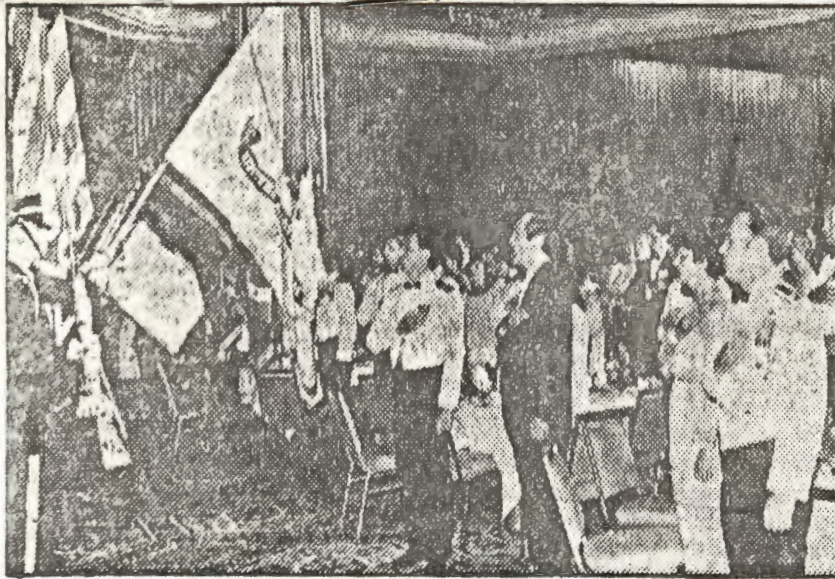
CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

4:00 p.m. -

Memorial Service

PARTIAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Henry Anderson, Wisconsin Division of Health & Social Services
 Ron De Boer, Agent Orange Victims of New York
 James H. Dwyer, State University of New York, Stony Brook
 Jon Furst, National Veterans Task Force on Agent Orange
 John Heuback, Minnesota Veterans Coalition
 Gerald Hirsh, Wadsworth Veterans Hospital
 Frank McCarthy, Agent Orange Victims International
 Tim Sampson, Citizens Action League
 Ron Simon, National Veterans Law Center
 Jeanne Stellman, Columbia University
 Rob Taylor, Ashcroft and Gerel
 Michael Uhl, Citizen Soldier
 Victor Yannacone Jr., Yannacone and Associates
 Steve Zoloth, Montifiore Hospital Medical Center
 Barry Commoner, The Center for the Biology of Natural System



Scene at the Shoreham during playing of the Anthem; by Harry Naltchayan

Two Faces of War

POW Power and the Agony of Agent Orange

By Myra MacPherson

Cheers burst forth and seats clattered as a roomful of military men and their wives moved as one in a standing ovation. The cheers were louder than when the name of their adored president, Ronald Reagan, was evoked. Richer, even, than the hosannas for "the man we all know and love—Richard Milhous Nixon," as their former commander in chief was described when his telegram greeting was read.

For here at the Shoreham last Sunday, in front of them, was H. Ross Perot, the pint-sized, crew-cut Texas billionaire and longtime friend of these men—250 former Vietnam POWs.

The world first heard of H. Ross Perot in 1970 when he loaded two jets with Christmas presents for the POWs and zapped around the world in vain, trying first to get Hanoi and then the Russians to let him in. There is a slight

flush of anger as Perot—as tough as he is generous—recalls the press reaction at the time. "As far as the press was concerned I was just a funny little guy doing odd things. But the facts are that Henry Kissinger asked me to do it and Al Haig was my contact! We got millions of dollars worth of press and it was all carefully planned to embarrass the North Vietnamese into changing their treatment of the POWs. And they did."

The former POWs, in starched white jackets filled with campaign ribbons, and their wives formed a long line as they filed by Perot, paying their respects to the man who barely reached their shoulders. "I just wanted to tell my children I met the greatest American in our time," gushed one wife. One ex-Air Force pilot asked Perot if he knew anyone with a Texas airline. "I'm

See VETERANS, B2, Col. 1

File Veterans

VETERANS, From B1

looking for a flying job." "Use my name," shoots back Perot. "I probably know 'em." A little laugh. "I hope I don't cost you the job."

There were lots of laughs. The former POWs and pilots are into "right stuff" talk these days. Jokes, macho, friendly congenial banter. "Hey, you ole sonofabitch, how are you?" One pilot to three women talking together. "Now there aren't enough pretty ladies to go around. This is no time for a hen party."

They were crowned heroes in a war that had few heroes. "Our psychological problems just drifted away," said Allen Stafford, commander, U.S. Navy. "Hell, we were professionals. I fly my plane and do what the boss says to do." He speaks of the men who fought the war on the ground. "I don't relate to their problems but I'm in sympathy with the poor guy that was on the ground. But our life just gets better. I just about had a coronary I was so glad Reagan got in. El Salvador? I'm not up to speed on that. But I have absolute faith the president will do what is right. I'd go again and fight it all the way. If he wants to send me in a cockpit, I'd go."

At American University this Memorial Day weekend, Stafford's gung-ho view was lost on another group of veterans—the drafted and enlisted men; the grunts and ground-pounders who slogged through the jungles of Vietnam. There were no White House parties for them as they returned from that same war. But the ex-POWs got a liberal discount on their Washington hotel rooms and eight airlines offered free rides to the Washington reunion. The 200 other vets and their families across town at the Agent Orange conference stayed in friends' houses, cheap hotels. They came from California and Boston and Florida. The Wisconsin group had bake sales to pay for their trip. And they had to sell T-shirts and fatigues at \$5 and \$7 to help meet expenses. They were doing a brisk business in shirts with such slogans as "No Draft, No Way," and a T-shirt with the slogan "Dow Shalt Not Kill" (for Dow Chemical Company, manufacturers of the chemical Agent Orange).

For they were here for a National

Vietnam Veterans Conference on Agent Orange. There were professors, scientists and lawyers in three-piece suits and veterans in faded fatigues as well as coats and ties. They tried in vain to get a representative of the government, of the Veterans Administration, to attend.

These are the men who were thankful they made it back whole but now feel they are victims of a sinister legacy—Agent Orange. The defoliant that rained on Vietnam for years contains dioxin, one of the world's most deadly chemicals. A single drop, if it could be divided equally among 1,000 people, would kill them all. It can topple a 150-foot hardwood tree in two days. The amount of Agent Orange sprayed in Vietnam totaled about 96 million pounds. The veterans are asking for testing, treatment and compensation for what they feel are Agent Orange-caused illnesses—everything from cancer to birth defects in their children.

"This is the first war that reached into our maternity wards," said Tom Valley, a Boston state representative and Vietnam veteran who received the silver star for bravery. Eighteen months ago, his daughter was born with a serious birth defect. "The Vietnam experience does not belong to the past," Valley said. The warfare we saw in Vietnam is the warfare of the future. Vietnam was a laboratory, our own men were the guinea pigs. Our men got caught in a crossfire of bullets and chemicals.

Their cause is not popular with the government or chemical companies who could have to pay billions in medical benefits and lawsuits if the list of diseases was ever linked to Agent Orange.

And so Ronald DeBoer, a tall, slim, handsome ex-veteran and director of Agent Orange Victims of New York, was speaking mostly to the converted as the keynote speaker.

Life was fine for DeBoer. He returned from Vietnam, went to college, started his own business. Then, he got cancer. "My wife read about Agent Orange—a herbicide that causes cancer in laboratory animals. I began to read and I still couldn't believe that my government would send me into an area that would be contaminated with what turns out to be the most toxic substance known to man." Laboriously, DeBoer began

trying to find out "what happened to the other men in A Troop, Seventh Squadron, 17th Air Cav." He called Kevin, a New York City cop whose first child was born dead and his second deformed. He got him in touch with another from his troop who told DeBoer, "My first child was born with a deformed leg and my second child was born mentally retarded." Like many of the other veterans and wives with deformed children, the man had no history of genetic problems. Next was Alan, a California mailman. He had developed hypertension, severe headaches, skin problems and "never felt well a day since I returned." DeBoer contends that "five out of six of the troop that I contacted had hard-core Agent Orange problems." He is loaded with statistics: "A new study found 43 percent higher incidence of soft tissue carcinoma among people who have been exposed to dioxin," and was greeted with sustained applause when he shouted, "We don't have to hear about rabbits and mice and monkeys. We have the people—2.48 million who served their country. They should be compared in a controlled study with 2.4 million men who did not go to Vietnam but were in the Army."

DeBoer finished with, "This Memorial Day, thousands of Vietnam vets aren't going to home-town parades because they're in cancer wards, thousands of Vietnam veterans' wives are going to be at cemeteries putting flowers on the graves of those who survived the war. That is our Memorial Day. But who in the VA stands up and speaks for us? As the people in Washington and the war contractors sit around the pools and go to parties and dip their manicured fingers in the caviar, you can be sure they are not thinking of us."

At the Shoreham, H. Ross Perot finally ducks out of the endless stream of praise from the former POWs. Perot was hiring Vietnam veterans for his Electronic Data Systems Corp. back

when "you were thought a militaristic lunatic to do that. We've hired 'em by the thousands and not had a psychological problem with a one. I feel sorry for the ones who have trouble but it's a gross distortion to say they're the average Vietnam vet." He is, however, interested in Agent Orange. "You know that fella that shot up the VA hospital in California? His wife sent me a letter. So I called her and asked if there was something I could do. She said, 'Nothing. He's dead.' She's got a very famous coroner doing a detailed autopsy to see if anything can be linked to Agent Orange."

The former POWs glisten with prosperity, look so healthy that it is hard to imagine that most spent seven years in prison. Seven of them line up and a wife snaps a picture as all grin. There are occasional, brief clouds. Asked about his children, one stops smiling. "I lost them when I was over there. They don't know me. But I'm remarried..." and the smile is back.

Ron Bliss, now a Texas lawyer, looks at another former POW and says, "He was my first roommate." He was not referring to a military academy. They were together for nearly a year in the prison dubbed The Hanoi Hilton. "He was tortured so badly he couldn't move his arms for months." As Bliss drifts off, Jack Fellows says, "He saved my life. When I couldn't move my arms he fed me, bathed me, clothed me."

Now, all these years later, Ross Perot has a thought on the way America treated veterans. "We've got ourselves in a strange box in this country. Making heroes out of hostages and prisoners and not the others. Think about it."

At the Agent Orange conference, no one was talking about wanting to be heroes. Many there were forged in the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) movement. They were there, among the several hundreds of war heroes who pelted ribbons and medals

at the Capitol terrace in 1971. They are leery of right-wing revisionism on Vietnam and feel the war was wrong.

Their concerns are personal. Margaret and Larry Driscoll wear their bright orange "Agent Orange Victims of New Jersey" T-shirts as their 4-year-old red-head, Erin, plays on the lawn outside the conference. Driscoll was a medic. He began getting severe headaches in Vietnam (one of the symptoms mentioned by alleged Agent Orange victims) and "they continue to this date. Nothing helps. All I can do is lie down and wait." He was in the computer field but took a laborer's job, unloading trucks, "just in case my headaches were caused by the mental stress of the job." In 1969, Margaret had a stillborn baby that was badly deformed. "A very rare defect. She was born with only half a brain. They couldn't give me any reason." Her husband's problems grew. Headaches, severe skin rash, "and now my joints kill me. I was on the swimming team before. Now I can't throw a ball 10 feet."

They held off on children and then, in 1977, Erin was born healthy. The next year, a baby was born with a cleft palate. "You look down at your newborn and you see this. She had only two chambers to her heart, a displaced spleen. She died three days later," says Margaret. Scientists refer to such personal information as "anecdotal data" that contain no hard-core facts. However, veterans and their families feel there are insidious and peculiar patterns to these stories. Margaret Driscoll was the third woman at the conference to mention that she had had amniocentesis; that no birth defects were detected and yet she gave birth to abnormal babies. "We went all through the genetics and the doctors still haven't given us an answer."

Today, they are still paying for the medical bills—"and the funeral bills."

The wives of former POWs are dressed in flowing chiffon and lace. They, like their husbands, are professionals. Little of those seven years of wondering, of raising children alone, shows on their faces today. "The children were all scarred," says Louise Muligan, whose oldest of six was 15 and the youngest 3 when her husband was cap-

tured. "But most of us have found our children have come out very well." It was hard on teen-agers, whose peers were vociferously anti-draft. "I told my oldest, when he went off to college, not to mention where his father was. He was having enough trouble without that."

Nearby sits a younger wife, Mary Jane McManus. She had been married four days when her husband left for Vietnam. He was captured June 14, 1967. She was in her early 20s. "I was in college in the nonviolent period." She and other POW wives tried to appeal to all political persuasions. "No matter how you felt about the war, they were political prisoners." Her pretty face grows hard when she remembers those in the peace movement "who wanted to try our husbands as political prisoners." They survived because, said McManus, "they followed a chain of command within the POW system."

McManus now has five children—ages 7, 5, 4, 3, 2—"and one coming."

There is talk of Agent Orange. "I don't know what we can do about that," she says. "My brother has had it, has had the acne and skin conditions for eight years." She is told of the women at the conference who feel that birth defects were caused by Agent Orange.

"Oh really," she said, sympathetically. "I didn't know about that." There is a moment's sigh.

At the Agent Orange conference, a lawyer says, more sadly than disparagingly, "The POWs are an accident of history—a bunch of right-wing officers turned into heroes."

Meanwhile, in the Shoreham banquet room, where every military man turned in precision as the color guard filed past, there is a heady feeling that their time is now. Approving nods as Reagan's emissary, Lyn Nofziger, assures that "no longer is the United States backing off in places like El Salvador."

And yet, even here, there is still an edge of ambivalence, a remembrance of bad times past.

McManus says softly, "Who would want to send a child or husband to any war?"

Staff writer Myra MacPherson is on leave and working on a book about the Vietnam generation.



Veterans
Administration

May 28, 1981



Dear Concerned Veterans:

The President has asked me as his newly designated Acting Administrator of Veterans Affairs to respond to your recent communication regarding issues of particular concern to Vietnam Veterans. He has personally appointed me Acting Administrator until such time as the Senate confirms his nominee, Mr. Robert Nimmo, as Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

First, you may have been unaware that the President had decided to continue the ongoing work of the Interagency Work Group which has been the focal point within the government for research on the possible effects of Agent Orange. While some activities and programs of the Federal government have been slated for substantial reductions or eliminations, the President's fiscal year 1982 budget contains \$9,540,000 of budgeted monies for research on the possible effects of Agent Orange. This is more than 300% greater than the \$3,126,000 budgeted for Agent Orange in the current fiscal year of 1981.

An unfortunate legacy of the Vietnam conflict is the continuing concern of many veterans that they may have suffered or may yet develop health problems as a result of long-term effects of certain chemicals to which they were exposed while serving in Vietnam. The President is committed to the fullest possible scientific examination of these concerns, with the aim of insuring that this matter is dealt with fairly and equitably. The important scientific research being coordinated by the White House Interagency Work Group, including

the Air Force Ranch Hand Personnel Study, will be a major priority of this Administration.

Second, in the overall figures for the Veterans Administration, the President's budget set out budget authority for fiscal year 1982 of \$24.2 billion. This was an increase of \$1.3 billion over the 22.9 billion budget authorization for current year 1981. In addition, \$597 million was added by the Reagan Bi-partisan Budget Resolution which will permit the Veterans Administration to: (1) operate with no reductions in personnel in the Department of Medicine and Surgery, (2) operate with no reductions in Veterans services.

Third, the President feels it is important to correct a widespread misunderstanding with respect to the funding of the Vietnam Veteran Outreach Centers. Many Vietnam Veterans have contacted the President in recent days expressing their dismay that these Outreach Centers are to be discontinued.

The President, in his nationally televised speech before the Congress on April 28th, stressed his support of the Reagan Bi-partisan Budget Resolution which restored most of the previously proposed cuts in Veterans programs. The level of funding restored is more than enough to fund the Outreach Centers, with a proposed budget of \$26 million for FY '82 as opposed to only \$12 million expended in FY '81.

The Congress has authorized the President's spending levels but must now pass legislation specifically extending the life of the Outreach Centers. This has the overwhelming support of both parties in both the House and Senate. The President wants you to know that he is specifically committed to keeping the Outreach Centers funded and open when Congress authorizes and appropriates funds for this program.

Fourth, the Veterans Administration has been specifically directed by the White House to stop plans to implement any proposed reductions in Veterans programs which were reversed and restored by the Reagan Bi-partisan Budget Resolution.

The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, and Jewish War Veterans have all endorsed the Reagan Bi-partisan Budget Resolution which contains the President's aforementioned support of veteran's programs.

My office looks forward to working with you now and in the future.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Donald L. Custis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name "Custis" being more prominent.

Donald L. Custis
Acting Administrator

Mortality Analysis of Agent Orange

Company Studies Differ Drastically

By Cheryl J. Koehler, RN,

Bio Feedback Clinician and Chairperson of Medical Board of Veterans Leadership Conference

Second in the series of articles

I stated in my last article that Dioxin is one of the most dangerous and toxic chemicals known to man and that it has been found to be carcinogenic and mutagenic in one part per trillion.

It appears that some researchers have not found Agent Orange - Dioxin, to be a strong carcinogenic agent, but possibly a weak carcinogen.

Two such studies have been done by Dow Chemical Company and a third study by Monsanto.

A point to keep in mind is that Dow Chemical Company and Monsanto were large producers of Dioxin.

In the first study done by Dow Chemical Company, they had 204 employees exposed to Dioxin during its manufacturing. This occurred from the year 1950 to 1971. The length of exposure of employees was found to be from less than one year to a maximum of 10 years.

It was demonstrated that those employees exposed to Dioxin dust at a level of one part per trillion experienced nasal irritation, sneezing, and a bitter taste in the mouth after exposure. Medical reports of these employees show they had no evidence of skin irritation, as Chloracne or Porphyria Cutanea Tarda, which is one of the most common reactions to Dioxin, as is now being reported by the veterans exposed to Dioxin in Vietnam.

Chloracne is a skin disorder characterized by comedones (black-heads), cysts, pustules and abscesses, which can be a result of liver dysfunction or dysfunction of fat metabolism. I would then say that Chloracne is a symptom of other underlying diseases of dysfunctions.

Porphyria Cutanea Tarda is classified under genetic metabolic anomalies. This group of diseases represent inherited or more rarely acquired disorders or Porphyrin metabolism or disturbance of Pyrrole Biosynthesis.

Porphyrin is a structure forming the framework of all porphyrins. Porphyrins are accessory substances needed for formation of hemoglobin. When the synthesis of the porphyrins is abnormal, a condition which is found in liver disease is seen. The presence of porphyrins in body fluids frequently causes skin to become quite sensitive to light and exposure to sunlight which often leads to bullous lesions.

The Porphyrias may be divided by clinical symptoms and biochemical differences into two main groups. 1. Erythropoietic Porphyrias where porphyrins are found in the normoblasts of the bone marrow and 2. Hepatic Porphyrias which can be subdivided into acute intermittent Porphyria, Variegate Porphyria and Porphyria Cutanea Tarda in which excessive Porphobilinogen and porphyrin production occur in the liver. Porphyria Cutanea Tarda is believed to be inherited because the pathogenesis is poorly understood and clinical manifestations vary so widely. Precise classification is difficult. The following is a commonly accepted description of the salient features of the disease.

Classically, Porphyria Cutanea Tarda develops in middle age and is more common in men than in women. It has also been associated with alcohol abuse. The pathogenesis involves excessive hepatic production of Uro-Porphyrins, porphyrins found in urine. The cardinal manifestations are photosensitivity, hirsutism (a condition characterized by excessive hair growth or the present of hair in unusual places), hyperpigmentation, and sclerodermoid changes in the skin. Some patients suffer bouts of colicky abdominal pain and neurologic disturbances.

A symptomatic form of Porphyria Cutanea Tarda also exists which is acquired rather than inherited. The underlying cause appears to be impaired liver function. This group should include such conditions as hepatoma, chloracne in persons exposed to industrial chemicals as Dioxin and lead intoxication and ingestion.

Out of this first study done by Dow Chemical Company, 204 employees were observed. Only one employee's death was attributed to respiratory cancer. This employee was a 61 year old man, retired, and had a history of exposure to Dioxin over an eight year period. He also smoked two packs of cigarettes a day for many years.

From this study of 204 Dow Chemical workers, Dow Chemical feels that there is no adverse mortality effects found in association with the exposure to Dioxin-Agent Orange in the work environment.

"From this study, Dow Chemical feels that there is no adverse mortality effects found..."

In another study conducted on 61 male Dow Chemical workers done in 1964, we get different findings.

These 61 employees were exposed to Dioxin during its production. Forty nine men of the 61 experienced skin reactions from the exposure to Dioxin. They developed Chloracne.

In this group of 61 employees, 4 deaths were observed. One of these deaths was caused by cardiovascular disease. The three other deaths were attributed to cancer, one of these being an adeno-carcinoma. The primary site was unknown. The second was a fibrosarcoma and the third was a glioma with metastases. All of these employees who died, smoked cigarettes.

Within this industrial population experiencing a chloracne with severity ranging from questionable chloracne to severe chloracne over the face, scalp, ears and neck, we also find Porphyria Cutanea Tarda, hepatotoxicity and a variety of poorly defined neurologic abnormalities.

It appears that there is an increase in cancer mortality in this group but that each cancer reported was of a different type and none was apparently primarily of the liver.

It does seem that Dioxin is an immunological depressant retarding the bodies' mechanisms to defend itself against cancer.

From this study of 61 Dow Chemical workers it appears that Dioxin could be classed as a weak carcinogen, as no single type of tumor was prevalent and does not seem to be organ or tissue specific.

The third study to be presented is one done by Monsanto. Here they had 121 employees exposed to Dioxin during an accidental explosion of an autoclave, releasing Dioxin into the air.

These employees who worked in production and were involved in the cleanup after the accident, began to develop symptoms immediately following exposure. Their symptoms ranged from eye and respiratory tract irritation, headaches, dizziness and nausea and severe skin reactions. After these initial symptoms subsided, chloracne and other symptoms such as hepatic dysfunction, peripheral neuritis and disorders of fat metabolism and Porphyria Cutanea Tarda were prevalent.

We still have only limited research on the long-term effects of Dioxin - Agent Orange. But these findings are a little less dismal where cancer is concerned. It appears Dioxin is not a strong carcinogenic chemical but may be a weak carcinogen.



Veterans For Republicans

A Country Worth Fighting For Is Worth Voting For

Bill Ayres, Director
Howard Vander Clute, Jr.
Deputy Director

POSITION PAPER ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

With more than 30 million veterans of voting age in the U.S., representing a significant inroad into most voting blocks, obviously there is a definite need to place strong campaign emphasis on the needs and desires of all veterans, and to develop and aggressively promote a reasonable, well-balanced and forward-moving veterans policy which will be attractive to all veterans. This policy should be so structured as to at least emphasize the following general areas of veteran interest:

1. Maintenance of the VA system as a distinct, independent agency, free from tampering by the Executive and Legislative branches of government. There have been several attempts by the Democrats to transfer traditional veterans benefits programs to other agencies.¹ One of the major veteran complaints is that the VA is not responsive to their needs, and that it often works against veterans' interests! Establishment of the VA along the lines of the Federal Reserve Board's independence of governmental control would go a long way to alleviate these fears.
2. Re-establish veterans as the first priority of the VA Hospital system. The Democrats recently pushed the illegal aliens on the VA hospitals with priority over veterans. Vets must be assured of first priority for VA health care! The VA hospital system must be expanded and modernized so as to provide adequate and proper health care to all veterans who are entitled to it. This would necessitate the re-opening of the 10,000 beds Carter has abolished, the restoration of the VA budget (as a percentage of the total budget) from FY 81's 3.45% to at least FY 76's 6.7%, and the establishment of permanent pay legislation for VA personnel to stem their outflow from the VA.²
3. Veterans pensions, disability benefits, vocational rehabilitation and educational assistance must be secured from budgetary tampering and indexed to the actual rise in inflation, with no subsequent slippage as the economy strengthens.
4. Although the effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam vets has yet to be scientifically proven, efforts should be made to determine the possibility of such side effects on veterans;³ pending final determination, it would be appropriate and responsible to grant temporary VA medical care to vets suspected of suffering from Orange toxicity. This is the least we owe to vets who may be suffering irreparable damage due to a government-sponsored program!

5. There should be active support for upgrading Vietnam-era veterans benefits! The campaign should actively recognize that there is a difference in definition between the terms "Vietnam war" and "Vietnam veteran", and that this is strongly perceived by the American public. This is greatly supported by a 1978 DAV study, as well as a recent major study by the Louis Harris firm.⁴ The latter study showed near unanimous public respect and support (97%) for Vietnam-era vets, that there is overwhelming support for increased benefits for Vietnam-era veterans, and that this issue is extremely popular with the 21 million non-Viet veterans. These conclusions strongly indicate, because of the density of popular support and feeling, that any media attempts to play on the Vietnam veteran issue as a Vietnam war issue will not carry with the voters, and that a strong, compassionate statement by Governor Reagan on the plight of Vietnam-era veterans, issued just before election day, will have a favorable effect on millions of Americans, especially in ethnic and minority groups.

6. Maintaining support for Veterans Preference in all federal hiring practices, with emphasis on the fact that this policy is fair compensation for those whose lives were interrupted by war-time military service. The Harris study concluded that there was overwhelming public support (72-21%) for the continuation of Veterans Preference, even at a time when most people indicate a strong desire to see the federal bureaucracy reduced.

In general, the overall campaign policies listed above should be presented in such a way as to represent not only the views of the incoming Republican officials, but to also be generally in line with the Republican Party's philosophy towards veterans. This might greatly increase and buttress veteran support for nationwide Republican tickets since most veterans organizations have traditionally viewed the Republican Party as the one most supportive of their interests!

¹1977: then-Secretary of HEW Califano attempted to include VA disability compensation in his "welfare reform" program.

1978: the Carter administration first advanced a plan to transfer the administration and funding of educational benefits for veterans to the purview of the incoming Department of Education.

²House Reports, House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

³In December, 1979, Congress passed legislation mandating such an investigation, and the House Veterans Affairs Committee has already held two oversight hearings on this issue. Ibid.

⁴DAV study, Forgotten Warriors. 1978
Louis Harris & Associates study, Myths and Realities: A Study of Attitudes Toward Vietnam Era Veterans.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 17, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR:

SECRETARY RICHARD SCHWEIKER
CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM, CABINET COUNCIL
ON HUMAN RESOURCES

FROM:

file
ROBERT CARLESON 
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF HUMAN RESOURCES
CABINET COUNCIL

SUBJECT:

Agent Orange Working Group

The Secretariat of the Human Resources Cabinet Council has established an Agent Orange Working Group. The lead agency will be HHS, and participating members drawn from:

Department of Defense
Department of Agriculture
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Labor
Environmental Protection Agency
Veterans Administration
Action
Office of Management and Budget
Council of Economic Advisers
Office of Science and Technology
Office of Policy Development

cc: Martin Anderson
Edwin Gray

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

File - Agent
Over

767-5078

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Martor -

Phil Brown called -
he needs some answers -
we are running out of time -
we have heard that
the Agent Orange, now that
it has been elevated to
Cabinet Council level,
will not do anything +
they will appoint all
new people. Also,

Weinberger has sent the
letter not to the Pres.
to sign but rather to
Air Force Sec'y one to
sign - which is not good.
→

Phil says this cannot
die.

Can we go to Mrs. Dole
to influence the Pres.
to sign the letter?

Can we call Sec'y
Weinb. office + disagree
w/ the recomm. that
the Pres. doesn't sign?
Can we try to influence
him to change?

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dennis Praeger
Science + Technology
Policy -
to argue for that

for Pres. to
sign letter, ^{broadcast}
Ch. 9

we have sensitivity - ^{ag. us}
Adm. not aware that

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Morton -
we are not
represented on this - why?
plus the representatives
are to come from
policy-level -
that means Phil
Brown is not
represented + all the
other technical
people - Much time
will be lost if
this happens

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
SECRETARY OF LABOR
ADMINISTRATOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR OF ACTION
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
CHAIRMAN, COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

SUBJECT: Agent Orange Working Group to Study the Possible
Long-term Health Effects of Phenoxy Herbicides and
Contaminants

The Administration has reviewed the excellent work of the Agent Orange Working Group and believes that it has made significant progress toward fulfilling its important mandate. By bringing together knowledgeable scientists from the various Federal departments and agencies the Working Group has identified ongoing research activities on phenoxy herbicides and contaminants and begun to develop and organize the means to carry out additional needed scientific research.

President Reagan shares the widespread public and Congressional concern over possible adverse health effects among Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides.

The President is personally determined to assure that the full resources of the Federal Government are available to support the Working Group's continuing efforts. Accordingly, the President has decided to make the Agent Orange Working Group an integral part of the Cabinet Council on Human

Resources and to expand the membership of the Group in order to accord the highest priority to its mission. This memorandum reaffirms the Agent Orange Working Group's mandate of December 11, 1979 and provides specific guidance as to how that mandate is to be carried out.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall continue to have lead responsibility for overall direction and management of the Agent Orange Working Group. The Secretary of Defense and the Administrator of Veterans Affairs shall continue to assure that their respective agencies participate fully in all Working Group activities. The Secretaries of Agriculture and Labor and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, each of whose agencies have until now been observers, shall assume full membership and assure that their agencies also participate fully in all Working Group activities.

The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Director of Action, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, as well as my office and that of the White House Science Advisor, shall assume membership on the Working Group and assure that the resources of their agencies are fully available to support it. Additionally, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, which has been actively involved in all Working Group activities as an observer, will be invited to continue to participate in that capacity, and the General Accounting Office,

which has been extremely helpful to the Working Group in the past, will continue to be kept abreast of developments and invited to advise and assist as appropriate.

The Working Group has initiated research efforts designed to find answers to many of the questions surrounding Agent Orange that have been raised. These efforts include the birth defects study being conducted by HHS' Centers for Disease Control, the Ranch Hand Study being conducted by the Air Force, the epidemiological study being planned by the Veterans Administration pursuant to P.L. 96-151, and the compilation by HHS' National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health of a national registry of workers exposed to dioxins. Each of these research activities, as well as the other important research activities being conducted under the overall guidance of the Working Group, should be continued without interruption or delay. Regular progress reports to the White House, the Congress and the public are to continue to be made by the Agent Orange Working Group.

Attached is a listing of the current members of the Working Group. Please review this list to be sure that your agency is adequately represented by appropriate policy-level individual(s). In order to facilitate the Group's effectiveness it is important that each agency's membership be limited. Please indicate to this office by Friday, July 24, your designated representative(s) to the Working Group (456-2884).

Martin Anderson
Assistant to the President
for Policy Development

Attachment

cc: Office of Technology Assessment
General Accounting Office

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 3, 1981

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am today signing H.R. 3499, the "Veterans' Health Care, Training, and Small Business Loan Act of 1981."

This bill extends a number of programs for Vietnam-era veterans, including eligibility of educationally disadvantaged veterans for special noncompetitive appointments to the Federal civil service and for vocational training and secondary school education. It also extends the Vietnam-era veterans' readjustment counseling program, with provision for shifting this program into regular Veterans' Administration medical facilities at the end of fiscal year 1984.

In addition, H.R. 3499 extends certain health care activities in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, other U.S. territories, and the Republic of the Philippines, and permits the Veterans' Administration to recover costs of providing certain non-service-connected health care.

This bill contains other major provisions on which I wish to comment.

The bill would grant eligibility for Veterans' Administration medical care to veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange and certain other toxic substances in Vietnam and also to veterans exposed to ionizing radiation from nuclear weapons testing or the U.S. occupation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima following World War II. Eligibility would be provided, without regard to financial need and on a priority basis.

Extension of medical services for exposure to Agent Orange and other substances in Vietnam must not prejudge the results of Federal studies we now have under way on this question.

I note, however, that the Congress has put a time limit of approximately three years on the new medical care eligibility, so that it can be reexamined after the initial results of the Agent Orange study are available. Moreover, I expect this provision to be implemented in a manner that will not add to budgetary costs of Veterans' Administration medical care and treatment.

Another section of H.R. 3499 would establish the number of hospital and nursing home beds in Veterans' Administration medical facilities at not more than 125,000 and not less than 100,000, and require the Veterans' Administration to operate and maintain not less than 90,000 such beds. Such a limitation must not restrict the ability of the Veterans' Administration to use an appropriate mix of health care services including ambulatory care to treat the maximum number of veterans.

This provision would also require that the President include in the budget transmitted to Congress for each fiscal year amounts for medical care and construction to enable the Veterans' Administration to operate and maintain the required

more

(OVER)

minimum number of hospital and nursing home beds. I interpret this language to mean what it says. This language does not, and in my view could not, require the President to request of Congress any specific amounts, for it is the President's constitutional duty to make recommendations to Congress of such measures as he judges necessary and expedient.

Finally, H.R. 3499 authorizes a new small business loan program in the Veterans' Administration for disabled and Vietnam-era veterans. Because this program might duplicate a similar program in the Small Business Administration and would involve the Veterans' Administration in an area in which it has no expertise, I intend to weigh carefully any efforts to fund this program.

Many of the provisions of H.R. 3499 are desirable and have been supported by the Administration. A number of them will be particularly helpful to Vietnam-era veterans. In view of my strong commitment to the welfare of America's veterans, particularly Vietnam-era veterans, I am approving this measure despite some of the concerns I have noted.

#

Vietnam veterans: Some sticky questions remain

By Mike Feinsilber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Parading Vietnam veteran George Robinson carried a sign on Constitution Avenue Saturday which declared that, for him, the war is still not over.

The weekend's events—a triumphant three-hour parade and the dedication of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial—went splendidly for participating veterans, serving as a long-needed catharsis.

But Robinson's sign raised some questions no parade can answer.

"Why wasn't war declared?"

"Why were the privileged exempt?"

"Why should the few sacrifice for the many?"

"Why only men to the slaughter?"

"What has been learned?"

"To whom are Americans indebted?"

Other veterans have other concerns, less global than Robinson's, but still urgent.

They feel they are still paying for having served.

Vietnam service is a job handicap, according to Larry Brinker, a Labor Department official. He said men who fought have higher unemployment than those who stayed home.

"They have to bear the brunt of the disapproval of that conflict," he said. "The biggest problem these veterans have had is the stigma of Vietnam."

Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant, is another vexing worry.

The Veterans Administration says it has no proof that those exposed to Agent Orange have a greater risk of contracting cancer or of fathering children with birth defects.

Three years after Congress told the VA to find the answers to those questions, the research project hasn't started.

At an Agent Orange forum last week, Glenn Sinclair, 35, of Cleveland said each of his five children was born with a birth defect.

When he went to a VA hospital for an exam, he said, it took all his self-control to keep from strangling the

clerk who met him with bureaucratic sarcasm: "Oh, another one of you."

"I pay taxes and I fought for this country, and I've been treated like dirt," Sinclair said.

Ex-GIs gave him a standing ovation.

Veterans pointed out that the memorial was built at the instigation of

veterans—not of the country—and that government participation was minimal.

VA Administrator Robert Nimmo made no public appearances, explaining through an aide that since he has announced that he is resigning, he thought it was best to keep a low profile.

Everett Alvarez Jr., deputy VA director and a prisoner in North Vietnam for 8½ years, was the only administration official in Saturday's memorial dedication.

Veterans commented that President Ronald Reagan found time to go to the Soviet Embassy to pay respects to Leonid Brezhnev but not to partici-

pate in the dedication.

Reagan flew to Chicago Saturday for a memorial service for his father-in-law, who died Aug. 19.

Robert Muller, a war-wounded paraplegic and executive director of the Vietnam Veterans of America, says he saw Reagan in the White House Thursday and begged him to attend.

"This is too significant for us as Vietnam veterans—too symbolic for America—for you not to be there," he said he told Reagan.

As for the larger questions, Muller said he agreed with the list Robinson carried on Constitution Avenue. "We've got to come to some consensus as to why we were in Vietnam and why we failed in our objectives and we need some assurances that we're not going down that road again."

Muller says he "got rid of a lot of baggage" when he visited Vietnam in December.

He adds: "We've got to strike a peace with Vietnam [through] diplomatic recognition and normalization so guys—just like they did in Germany and Japan—can go back to where they have their memories of the war and replace time-frozen images with some fresh images of a country at peace and a people that you don't have to regard as an enemy."

Most of the 2.7 million Vietnam veterans are employed, adjusted and self-sufficient, as the VA often points out.

But a poll commissioned by the VA in 1980 showed a residue of bitterness.

Vietnam veterans were asked if they had been made "suckers." Sixty-three percent said yes. A parade and a monument alone won't change their minds.

Exploitation of
access to the
President.

Recognition/
reparations for
Hanoi.