

NORTH DAKOTA VETERANS COORDINATING COUNCIL
Job Service North Dakota Building, Bismarck, North Dakota
March 2, 1983

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Aaberg. Those in attendance were:

AMERICAN LEGION

Milt Kane, Dept. Cmdr.
Vern Useldinger, Dept. Adj.
Gerald Taylor, Org. Rep.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

James Groven, Dept. Cmdr.
Marvin Konrad, Rep. Dept. Adj.
Jack Hilleboe, Rep. Org. Rep.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Paul Aaberg, Dept. Cmdr.
Ken McGaughey, Dept. Adj.
Bill Stepp, Org. Rep.

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Lloyd Zander, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs
Charles Code, Commandant, North Dakota Soldiers' Home
W. M. Williamson, State Director, Veterans Employment
Bill Hill, Dept. Cmdr., AMVETS
Elmer Ekern, Dept. Adj., AMVETS

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Joe Novak, Legislative Committee, American Legion
Wayne Tanous, Legislative Committee, DAV
Harry Moore, American Legion
Jim Welder, Soldiers' Home
Keith Kaiser, Department of Veterans Affairs
Richard Grenz, VFW
Cliff Jacobson, Vietnam Veterans of America
John Cameron, VVA
Allan Matties, VVA
Bob Hanson, Vietnam Veterans of North Dakota
Melvin Ojoe, VVA
Dan Jargo, VVA
Representative Larry Schoenwald, VVA

The Council discussed H.B. 1338, which seeks to open eligibility at the Soldiers' Home to everyone who served. This bill has passed the House. At the present time there are 55,000 war-time veterans. There are 13,000 peace-time veterans. We presently have 135 members, with a total capacity of 159.

A resolution passed by the American Legion at their Winter Conference was distributed. This resolution was passed unanimously and opposes H.B. 1338.

It was noted that H.C.R. 3043 has been passed by the House. This resolution seeks an interim study on whether benefits should be provided to peace-time veterans. The Council did support this bill.

After discussion, it was felt by the Council that H.B. 1338 is inappropriate at this time because under H.C.R. 3043, a study will be made to determine the feasibility, desirability, and fiscal impact of paying benefits to peace-time veterans. It was determined that at the hearing on this bill in the Senate tomorrow, each veterans organization will testify as to their feelings on this bill.

Joe Novak reported that S.B. 2121 deals with the position that the World War I veterans were having difficulty in attending the meetings of the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs. They asked that they be excused from this

Committee. This bill was introduced as an agency bill. It was drafted in the Attorney General's office and introduced prior to the legislature. It passed the Senate 49 - 0.

Subsequent to that, H.B. 1538 was introduced at the request of some members of the legislature. It sought to remove the World War I veterans and insert the Vietnam Veterans of America in their place.

At our last Council meeting in Fargo, the Veterans Coordinating Council decided to continue the support of S.B. 2121. Since there was no motion on H.B. 1538, it meant the Veterans Coordinating Council would take no position and that they would not appear at the hearing on H.B. 1538. As a result of their not appearing, H.B. 1538 was passed by the House.

Mr. Novak noted that when he appeared at the hearing in the House on S.B. 2121, the committee asked many questions. Finally he stated a personal feeling, noting that he was not speaking for the Veterans Coordinating Council. He suggested that the Governor be allowed to appoint the committee from any of the nominations submitted, without regard to the nominating organization.

Mr. Novak noted that when we left the meeting in Fargo he felt that we would not take a position on H.B. 1538, and the Vietnam Veterans of America would support H.B. 1538. Likewise, he felt the Council would support S.B. 2121, and the Vietnam Veterans of America would not take a position on it. However, Bob Hanson and Representative Schoenwald both appeared against S.B. 2121.

Discussion followed on the difference between the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council and the North Dakota Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Milt Kane expressed the opinion that the Council should stick with S.B. 2121 as written, and carry it through, noting that we recognize where the Vietnam Veterans of America are coming from, and would like to give them a chance to gain some membership, gain some solidarity, and then come back again later in a different approach, at which time we could support them.

Jim Groven stated he agrees with Mr. Kane. He would like to see the Vietnam Veterans of America sit on the Veterans Coordinating Council as an ex-officio member and another year down the road, try other action. Marvin Konrad stated he believes the Council should take the position to support S.B. 2121, and oppose H.B. 1538, not because we do not want to give the Vietnam Veterans of America any recognition, but because we would like them to improve their membership before seeking a position on this committee.

Bill Hill, Department Commander of AMVETS, noted that they definitely will be petitioning the Veterans Coordinating Council for voting status, but they have felt that they would join the Veterans Coordinating Council as an ex-officio member and learn. After they have proven themselves, they will be petitioning for voting status. It was noted that their membership is over 800 and the Vietnam Veterans of America reported their membership at about 75.

Bill Stepp noted that he feels there is something lacking from what the VFW and American Legion are providing and he would rather see the bills married in some fashion to give the Vietnam Veterans of America some representation.

Chairman Aaberg stated that he would like to see the Vietnam Veterans of America grow, attend the Veterans Coordinating Council meetings for the next year and a

half, and then propose some changes through the Council. In this way they would get their feet wet in attending Council meetings, and further down the road could petition the Council for voting membership.

Vern Useldinger noted that they are strongly behind veterans' purposes. He agrees that it would be terrible to bring this conflict into the hearing tomorrow and into the legislature when really they shouldn't have to consider it.

Jack Hilleboe noted that the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs has some concerns. He feels that some of this action would put us back many years, and asked if a compromise is possible. He suggested that S.B. 2121 be amended to have three representatives from Vietnam Veterans of America appointed to the Administrative Committee in 1985 if their membership reaches a certain figure.

Marvin Konrad moved the Council approve payment of \$26.89 to Bill Williamson for legislative expenses. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

Following a short break for discussion, Representative Schoenwald noted that the Vietnam Veterans of America would like to go along with a compromise of having five organizations (including AMVETS and the Vietnam Veterans of America) represented on the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs, with three representatives from each organization.

Marvin Konrad suggested the Council consider a compromise of having the membership divided as follows: 4 World War II veterans, 4 Korean veterans, and 4 Vietnam veterans, with nominations to come from the American Legion, VFW, and DAV.

Bill Stepp moved we increase the membership on the Administrative Committee to 15, with three representatives from the following veterans organizations: Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and Vietnam Veterans of America. The motion died for lack of a second.

Marvin Konrad moved we amend S.B. 2121 to include four World War II veterans, 4 Korean veterans, and 4 Vietnam veterans. Motion seconded by Milt Kane. The Vietnam Veterans of America stated they would not accept this compromise and would still oppose S.B. 2121. Motion defeated.

After further discussion, Bill Stepp moved that membership on the Administrative Committee be as follows: American Legion 3, VFW 3, DAV 3, Vietnam Veterans of America 1, and AMVETS 1. Motion seconded by Milt Kane. Bill Stepp moved to amend the motion as follows: That the membership of the AMVETS and Vietnam Veterans of America be increased to 2 members in 1984, and 3 members in 1985. Milt Kane seconded the amendment.

In discussion, Representative Schoenwald pointed out that this would give the Vietnam Veterans of America until 1985 to prove themselves in membership, and that if they do not, the situation can be rectified and the membership changed at the legislative session in 1985.

The original motion passed unanimously, and the motion, as amended, passed unanimously. Both legislative bills will be amended so that they are the same.

Joe Novak informed the Council that the Air Force will probably be getting approval of funding for building a new hospital on the Base. The minute this happens, the John Moses Hospital will revert to the Veterans Administration. They will declare it surplus property. Mr. Novak suggested that the Council

contact the Governor within the next few days to alert him to this possibility, and proposing that possibly this building might be used to provide services for a variety of agencies, for example, some beds for an intermediary care, some for nursing care, perhaps some for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, some for the Veterans Administration, and Social Services, with an affiliation with the Medical School at Grand Forks. He feels we should make the Governor aware of our interest and willingness to cooperate and suggest he appoint a study group very soon.

Ken McGaughey moved Joe Novak and Wayne Tanous approach the Governor regarding this matter. Motion seconded by Milt Kane and carried.

The meeting was adjourned.