



Vietnam Today

Newsletter of the Australia Vietnam Friendship Society

Keeping the ball rolling

The Australia Vietnam Friendship Society (AVFS) made a splash with its first national conference held in Adelaide in September. Some impressive reports were made and some big plans were outlined. Hopes are high that our organisation focused on strengthening bonds of solidarity between our two countries can extend its influence and attract many new members.

Two months later, indications (like activity on the AVFS FaceBook page) are encouraging. Contact with the students in the Vietnam International Students Association (VISA) has been strengthened. Representatives from AVFS and VISA met with a delegation from the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations while they were visiting Melbourne at the end of September (*see report this issue*). Executive members of the Society have maintained contact with the Vietnamese embassy in Canberra and the consulate in Sydney.

Assistance from the Maritime Union of Australia to our Society to this point has been outstanding. That's hardly surprising. SA Secretary Jamie Newlyn provided a useful history of that union's proud tradition of solidarity with the Vietnamese people at the conference (*see below*). Vietnam Today would like to pay tribute to the seamen and waterside workers of Australia for this ongoing contribution.

MUA SA Secretary Jamie Newlyn addresses first national conference of AVFS

Comrades and Friends of Vietnam ,thank you so much for the opportunity to be a part of the inaugural Australian Vietnam Friendship Society National Conference

I'd like to acknowledge the founding committee including AVFS President Paul Noack, Secretary Ron Hall, Treasurer Kym Sampson, Vice Presidents, Assistant Secretaries and, of course, the committee.

The history of Vietnam has been one of conflict and



MUA SA Secretary Jamie Newlyn (right) presents cheque for affiliation to AVFS Treasurer Kim Sampson

struggle. Her people have been fighting for sovereignty from invading nations for hundreds of years. Vietnam and her people are fighters.

Few Australians are familiar with the history of Vietnam other than the Vietnam War or, as the Vietnamese refer to it, the American war.

Prior to that war, the Indo Chinese war where the Vietnamese were seeking sovereignty from the French in armed struggle *(Continued page 4)*

AVFS/MUA receive VUFO delegation

On September 30, representatives of the Australia Vietnam Friendship Society met with a visiting delegation from Vietnam. The meeting was hosted by the Victorian branch of the Maritime Union of Australia.

MUA state secretary Kevin Braken welcomed the visiting delegation and spoke of the long-standing solidarity and friendship between the MUA and the people of Vietnam.

The delegation included Mr Vu Xuan Hong who is a member of the National Assembly (Vietnam's parliament) and president of the Vietnam Union of Friend-



Guests from the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations with representatives of the AVFS and the MUA in Melbourne

ship Organisations (VUFO) and executive member of the Vietnam Committee for Foreign Affairs. The six person delegation met with NGOs while in Australia as well as holding a meeting with the Vietnamese ambassador to Australia in Canberra.

AVFS national president Paul Noack and national treasurer Kim Samspon welcomed the delegation and renewed their friendship with Mr Vu Xuan Hong, who they had visited in Hanoi earlier this year.

AVFS national executive members Bev Hall and Dao Thi Hang flew from Adelaide to attend the meeting and made presentations

Matt Purcell, assistant national coordinator for the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), made a presentation, and showed a video on the activities of the ITF.

The delegation and AVFS thanked Kevin Braken and the MUA for their hospitality, and they all enjoyed both the discussion and a traditional Australian BBQ.

Vietnam and influenza

The following is a contribution regarding influenza in our region by AVFS treasurer Kim Sampson. Kim works for the Influenza Specialist Group which addresses influenza related issues in Australia, largely through education. He also work for APACI (the Asia-Pacific Alliance for the Control of Influenza), that tries to address the same problems in the Asia-Pacific region:

Pandemics are known to occur regularly, but it is impossible to predict exactly when the outbreak will occur. As a result of recent pandemics in the region

(including SARS in 2002), the Australian Government developed a comprehensive plan to prepare the country for a future (but inevitable) pandemic event.

One of the major concerns for Governments around the world is that avian flu (H5N1 Bird Flu) will eventually mutate and become transmissible from human to human. At present, it is only transmissible from animal (bird) to human. The mortality rate of the H5N1 Bird Flu virus in infected humans is 50% to 75%. The pandemic planning that has taken place has been with this particular disease in mind.

A pandemic did arrive in 2009, but it was a swine flu (H1N1), and turned out to be much less virulent than expected. While this meant that many lives were spared, the Australian Government came under a lot of criticism from certain areas of the community and media for responding too excessively. The fact of the matter is that Australia was very fortunate that the swine flu was not as devastating as it could have been, because it enabled the Government to 'road test' it's pandemic plan.

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory disease, and is frequently under-reported. Some patients who are admitted to hospital with influenza may die of a heart attack or kidney failure (or any number of conditions), which is brought on by the influenza. The death however is recorded as heart attack or kidney failure. In Australia, seasonal influenza is often responsible for more deaths than car accidents.

The influenza virus can remain alive for more than 8 hours on hard surfaces. If someone with a flu infection



were to cough or sneeze over the table at which we presently sit, people using the table during the course of the day could easily become infected.

The best way to prevent influenza is through vaccination, although good hygiene is also important (regular washing of hands, good cough etiquette, etc).

One of the major issues for any Government is to ensure their healthcare workers are vaccinated against influenza. After all, they are the people coming into contact with the most vulnerable in the community. Unfortunately, the percentage of health care professionals that are vaccinated is quite low. There are a variety of reasons for this, including fear of needles (which is rather ironic)!

I work for the Influenza Specialist Group where we endeavour to address these problems in Australia, largely through education. I also work for APACI (the Asia-Pacific Alliance for the Control of Influenza), where we are trying to address the same problems in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2012 APACI will be holding a flu summit in Bangkok. This will attract health professionals and scientists from many different countries within and around the Asia-Pacific region. If the meeting is a success, we would like to hold a similar summit in Vietnam.

One of the major causes of death in Vietnam is respiratory disease. The main flu concern in Vietnam is avian flu, although it appears to be currently under control. There are a number of other respiratory conditions affecting livestock (such as blue ear), but APACI's concern is with the effect on the human population.

The delegation from Vietnam expressed a desire for aid from the AVFS (and Australia generally) to focus on helping children, as well as victims of agent orange. The fact that there are over 8 million children with a disability in Vietnam could not be ignored.

Many people who have a disability are also at high risk of complication from influenza. While the AVFS will continue to raise funds for Vietnam, organizations like APACI can contribute in other ways, such as educating the population – in particular health professionals – so as to reduce the mortality and morbidity among the vulnerable members of Vietnamese society.

Join the Australia Vietnam Friendship Society



Please send cheques and money orders to:

AVFS
PO Box 932
South Melbourne, VIC 3205

Electronic transfers should be made to:

AVFS
Commonwealth Bank of Australia
South Melbourne Branch
BSB: 063 215
Account No: 10323739
Please be sure to identify your payment

Application for membership of the Australia Vietnam Friendship Society

Name

Address

..... Post Code

Phone Email

Fees (please circle):

Individual \$15
Concession \$10
Organisations up to 1,000 \$100
Organisations up to 5,000 \$250
Organisations over 5,000 \$400
Donation

Areas of Interest:

Australia Vietnam Relations
Health & Education
Business & Economic Development
Culture
Other



Australian seamen and waterside workers have a long and proud tradition of solidarity with the Vietnamese people

Prior to that it was war and struggle against the Chinese and even the Japanese made an attempt.

No one can deny the great fighting spirit that has led now to a successful socialist economy and, importantly, its sovereignty.

That success and sovereignty was aided in some small way by the actions and activities of millions around the world through moratorium marches and action by Trade Unions.

My union, for instance, now called the Maritime Union of Australia was involved in action during the Indo china wars with the French in 1950 when a vessel called the Radnoor was blackbanned by Wharfie's who refused to load ammo, guns and bombs, this was also supported by Seaman. That vessel ended up being loaded by Service men

In 1965 SUA members marched under the banner of "Trade don't invade" and called on the Australian Government to withdraw military commitment at its AGM. This led to the first industrial action when tugs refused to tie up USS Vancouver and Sub USS Megralal. The Liberal government threatened to use the crimes act against the union.

Further action occurred in May 1966. Members of the SUA were asked to man the Boonaroo and take war supplies to Vietnam and Australian Seaman refused to man the vessel. The SUA had made unequivocal stands against imperialist wars in Asia. Another vessel, the Jeparit, was also used to carry war supplies the SUA manned this vessel only after a dispute to have weapons removed from the cargo.

In 1967 the Boonaroo and Jeparit were to carry explosives and bombs to Vietnam. The ACTU agreed but the SUA and WWF went against the recommendations of the ACTU. Australian Seafarers who went to Vietnam earlier on the Boonaroo and Jeparit came back with real stories and experiences and relayed them to Comrades in Australia which led to a refusal to carry explosive cargo destined for war.

In an article to the Seaman's journal, the following comments were made: "our concept of Asia should be of understanding and friendship between all Asian countries, a concept of Australia not as the 'leading nation' but as one of the many partners in Asia, working for peace, welfare and happiness of her own people and her neighbours in Asia"

These comments are as relevant today. Vietnam today is a thriving country, under a socialist government. Tourism is a feature of the economy, as well as manufacturing and production including oil and gas.

I commend the initiative to start an Australian Vietnam Friendship Society. The title in itself fosters the importance of internationalism, understanding, and friendship and eliminates racism, xenophobia and hatred.

It is important in exchanging ideas, values and support culturally, industrially and economically.

I truly believe this friendship society will embody the principles of solidarity and unity and therefore I am pleased to officially open the Inaugural National Conference of the Australian Vietnam Friendship Society. *- Jamie Newlyn, September 2011*

Boonaroo - a song of protest by Don Henderson from 1968

Chorus

*Oh, who will man the Boonaroo?
Who will sail her, be the crew,
sailing on the Boonaroo?*

*Is there food and is there store
to feed the hungry, clothe the poor?
In this world their number isn't few.
In her cargo would you find
any way for one mankind,
sailing on the Boonaroo.*

*Is there bandage by the reel?
Is there medicine to heal?
Christ knows, there's healing work to do.
In her cargo would you find
any way for one mankind,
sailing on the Boonaroo?*

*Would the hull be filled with material to build,
perhaps a bridge for a world that's split in two?
In her cargo would you find
any way for one mankind,
sailing on the Boonaroo?*

*Or jam packed in the hold,
is there grief and death untold
and asked "Why?" have to answer true.
In her cargo would you find
any way for one mankind,
sailing on the Boonaroo?*