

REMARKS OF
CONGRESSMAN BOB DOLE
35TH ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
SHERATON HOTEL, PHILADELPHIA, PA.
JUNE 26, 1965

I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU BRIEFLY TONIGHT ABOUT VETERANS AFFAIRS,
BUT FIRST WANT TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE REAL AMERICAN HEROES TODAY --
THOSE WHO ARE FIGHTING -- AND YES -- DYING IN VIET NAM.

THE HEADLINES THESE DAYS ARE FILLED WITH FLOWING TRIBUTES TO
THE ASTRONAUTS -- AND CERTAINLY THEY DESERVE RECOGNITION FOR THEIR
HISTORY MAKING ACHIEVEMENTS, ACCOMPLISHED BECAUSE OF DEDICATION AND
COURAGE.

LET US NOT FORGET, HOWEVER THAT THOUSANDS OF OTHER AMERICAN
BOYS WITH LOVED ONE'S AT HOME ARE ALSO RISKING THEIR LIVES IN ANOTHER
IMPORTANT RACE WITH THE COMMUNIST WORLD -- THE RACE FOR FREEDOM IN
THE WORLD. AS THE CASUALTIES, KILLED, WOUNDED OR MISSING, GROW,
REMEMBER THAT THESE YOUNG MEN ARE NOT JUST STATISTICS IN A BLOODY,
BITTER WAR BUT ARE ALSO REAL AMERICAN HEROES. THEY RECEIVE SCANT
NOTICE IN THE PRESS, ON RADIO OR T.V. -- THEY ARE NOT ACCORDED THE
ACCOLADES AT THE WHITE HOUSE OR IN OUR NATION'S CAPITAL OR OUR
LARGEST CITIES, BUT WITHOUT THEM YOU AND I AND ALL AMERICANS WOULD

JUN 26 1965

2

BE IN DANGER.

UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, I, FOR ONE, FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THE LEADERS OF "TEACH INS" FOR CLEARLY THE UNITED STATES CANNOT MAKE NATIONAL POLICY ON THE BASIS OF POLITICAL REVIVAL MEETINGS -- NOR, IN MY OPINION, DO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE ANY OBLIGATION TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH MEETINGS. GOVERNMENT POLICY MAKERS, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE TO EVERY GROUP THAT MEETS IN WASHINGTON AND DEMANDS THEIR PRESENCE. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED "TEACH INS" ARE NOT DESIGNED TO PROMOTE LEARNING BUT TO DISORIENT STUDENT AND FACULTY PARTICIPANTS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. "TEACH INS" DO NOT SPEAK FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE FACULTIES AND STUDENT BODIES OF OUR GREAT AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES. THE GREAT MAJORITY, IN MY OPINION, REJECT THE QUESTIONABLE FRINGE OF THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION WHICH ATTEMPTS TO LECTURE THE PRESIDENT, CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

I ^{was} AM ALSO A LITTLE PERTURBED ~~THE~~ ^{About} JUST LAST WEEK, THE ~~PRESIDENT~~ AUTHORIZED RELEASE OF \$37.5 MILLION WORTH OF SURPLUS FOOD TO THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC AMID REPORTS THAT AT THE SAME TIME NASSER IS SELLING FOOD TO CUBA AND COMMUNIST CHINA.

I AM EVEN MORE DISTURBED ABOUT CONTINUING TALK OF EXPANDING TRADE WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES -- EVEN IF IT MEANS THE SALE OF WHEAT RAISED IN MY DISTRICT. IT SEEMS INCONSISTENT TO "FEED" COMMUNISTS WOTH ONE HAND AND "FIGHT" COMMUNISM WITH THE OTHER. IF WE HAD ANY DREAMS ABOUT TRADE EXPANSION WITH RUSSIA, RED CHINA, OR OTHER

JUN 26 1965

3

COMMUNIST COUNTRIES THE EVENTS IN VIET NAM SHOULD BRING US BACK TO REALITY -- THAT IS, IF WE TRULY VALUE PRINCIPLE OVER PROFIT.

WELL PERHAPS THAT IS ENOUGH ON THESE SUBJECTS BUT AS VETERANS AND SPECIFICALLY AS DISABLED VETERANS YOU KNOW -- AND I KNOW -- A LITTLE ABOUT THE PRICE OF FREEDOM.

NOW, LET'S LOOK FOR A FEW MINUTES AT ~~THE OTHER HALF OF THIS~~ ^{The Role of} ~~PARTNERSHIP~~ IN VETERANS AFFAIRS -- THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES AND IN PARTICULAR, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WHEN WE EVALUATE THE ACTIVITIES OF CONGRESS FROM THE VIEW POINT OF VETERANS, WE GENERALLY THINK IN TERMS OF THREE OR FOUR MAJOR BILLS PER YEAR COMPENSATION INCREASES; PENSION LIBERALIZATION; HOSPITAL CONSTRUCTION AND THE LIKE. ACTUALLY, IN ANY PROGRAM AS LARGE AND COMPLICATED AS THE VETERANS PROGRAM, THERE IS A CONTINUING NECESSITY FOR AMENDMENT, MODERNIZATION AND CHANGE IN THE LAWS REGULATING THE PROGRAM.

TO GIVE YOU SOME IDEA OF THE SCOPE OF OUR WORK IN THIS IMPORTANT FIELD, YOU WILL BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT IN THE 88TH CONGRESS, 508 BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS WERE INTRODUCED AND REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS. THE COMMITTEE HELD 50 FORMAL PUBLIC HEARINGS AND 21 EXECUTIVE SESSIONS AND REPORTED FAVORABLY 41 BILLS. OF THESE 41 BILLS, 29 OF THEM BECAME LAW. OF THE BALANCE, 5 FAILED TO PASS THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WHILE 7 DIED IN THE SENATE.

JUN 26 1965

4

UNDOUBTEDLY, YOU ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE MAJOR ENACTMENTS OF THE 88TH CONGRESS. ONE WAS THE PENSION BILL, PUBLIC LAW 88-664. THIS BILL PROVIDED AN INCREASE IN MONTHLY PAYMENTS TO EVERYONE RECEIVING A NONSERVICE CONNECTED PENSION UNDER THE SO-CALLED "NEW LAW." THE GREATEST INCREASES, OF COURSE, WERE PROVIDED FOR THE SERIOUSLY DISABLED AND THE MOST NEEDY.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT LAW FROM THE 88TH CONGRESS WAS THE NURSING CARE BILL IN WHICH, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF NURSING CARE FOR VETERANS WAS AUTHORIZED TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM.

ENOUGH OF THE PAST FOR NOW, THOUGH. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE PRESENT.

UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT CONSIDERED BY THE CONGRESS IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN THE CLOSING OF VETERANS HOSPITALS AND OTHER FACILITIES. ON JANUARY 13TH OF THIS YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCED PLANS TO CLOSE 11 VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITALS, 4 DOMICILIARY HOMES AND 17 REGIONAL OFFICES NOT LATER THAN JULY 1ST. THE ANNOUNCED ORDER PROVOKED A STORM OF PROTEST FROM INDIVIDUAL VETERANS, THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, CIVIC GROUPS, STATE, COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

JUN 26 1965

5

EXTENSIVE PUBLIC HEARINGS WERE CONDUCTED BY TWO POWERFUL COMMITTEES IN THE SENATE AND BY THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. AN UNRELATED APPROPRIATION BILL WAS AMENDED WITH A PROVISION PROHIBITING THE CLOSING OF ANY VETERANS ADMINISTRATION FACILITY PRIOR TO MAY 1ST. STILL THE PROTESTS CONTINUED UNTIL THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT SOME QUESTION HAD BEEN RAISED IN HIS MIND AS TO THE PROPRIETY OF THE CLOSING ORDER AND THAT HE WAS APPOINTING A PANEL OF DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS TO INVESTIGATE AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO HIM ON THE SUBJECT. THE REST IS HISTORY. THE PANEL INVESTIGATED, MADE ITS RECOMMENDATIONS, AND JUST RECENTLY THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT HE CONCURRED IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS. AS A RESULT, FIVE OF THE 11 HOSPITALS, 2 OF THE 4 COMICILIARIES AND 8 OF THE 17 REGIONAL OFFICES WILL BE KEPT OPEN. PLANS TO CLOSE THE REMAINING FACILITIES WILL GET UNDER WAY IMMEDIATELY. MEANWHILE, THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS LAST WEEK REPORTED FAVORABLY H.R. 202 THIS BILL WOULD PROHIBIT THE CLOSING OF ANY HOSPITAL OR DOMICILIARY WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE VETERAN' COMMITTEE. LET ME HASTEN TO ADD THAT THIS ACTION, WHILE COMMENDABLE, SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED WITH ANY: DEGREE OF OPTIMISM. EVEN IF THE BILL MOVES RAPIDLY THROUGH BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, THE PRESIDENT STILL MUST APPROVE IT. THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS APPROVAL APPEARS TO BE RATHER REMOTE AT THIS POINT.

JUN 26 1965

6

NOW, WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US WITH RESPECT TO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL SYSTEM. IF WE CAN ANALYZE THE SITUATION COMPLETELY SEPARATED FROM THE EMOTIONALISM INVOLVED IN INDIVIDUAL HOSPITAL CLOSINGS, CERTAIN SIGNIFICANT FACTS ARE CLEAR. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE MERE FACT THAT A VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL EXISTS DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY GRANT IMMORTALITY TO THAT HOSPITAL OR THAT LOCATION. A PHYSICAL PLANT THAT BECOMES OBSOLETE TO THE POINT THAT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR COSTS ARE EXCESSIVE SHOULD BE REPLACED. THE SHIFTING VETERAN POPULATION SHOULD PROPERLY BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING THE LOCATION OF VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITALS. FINALLY, WE MUST AGREE THAT A HOSPITAL LOCATED NEAR OR ADJACENT TO A MAJOR MEDICAL CENTER WITH ITS TEACHING AND RESEARCH FACILITIES, MODERN EQUIPMENT AND MEDICAL SPECIALISTS CAN OFFER COMPLETE HOSPITAL SERVICES THAT ARE TRULY "SECOND TO NONE."

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, HOWEVER, ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS. THE FACT THAT A HOSPITAL IS LOCATED IN A RURAL AREA INSTEAD OF ADJACENT TO ^a MODERN MEDICAL CENTER SHOULD NOT BE JUSTIFICATION FOR CLOSING THE HOSPITAL. THE FACT THAT WE HAVE SUPERMARKETS DOESN'T MEAN THAT ALL CORNER GROCERY STORES SHOULD BE CLOSED.

JUN 26 1965

7

SECONDLY, AND THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT, NONE OF THE REASONS CITED FOR CLOSING HOSPITALS, HOWEVER VALID THEY MAY BE, SHOULD BE USED TO OBSCURE THE MORE SINISTER PRUPOSE OF REDUCING THE OVERALL NUMBER OF HOSPITAL BEDS DEVOTED TO THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF VETERANS.

ALTHOUGH THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION TELLS US THAT REPLACEMENT HOSPITALS ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES OF PLANNING OR CONSTRUCTION, THE INDISPUTABLE FACT REMAINS THAT THEIR PLANS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1966 BEGINNING JULY 1ST, CALLED FOR THE OPERATION OF 2,536 FEWER GENERAL MEDICAL AND NEUROPSYCHIATRIC BEDS THAN ARE BEING OPERATED IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR. IF WE SUBTRACT THE BEDS REPRESENTED BY THE FIVE HOSPITALS REMAINING OPEN, 901, THEN WE STILL WILL LOSE 1,635 BEDS FROM THE SYSTEM NEXT YEAR.

CLOSELY RELATED TO THIS PROBLEM IS THE SITUATION ON NURSING CARE BEDS. IN AUGUST OF 1963, PRESIDENT KENNEDY AUTHORIZED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 2,000 NURSING CARE BEDS IN THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM. HE SPECIFIED THAT THESE BEDS WERE TO BE IN ADDITION TO THE HOSPITAL BEDS THEN IN OPERATION. IN AUGUST 1964, THE CONGRESS PASSED A BILL AUTHORIZING 4,000 NURSING CARE BEDS IN THE SYSTEM. THIS, OF COURSE, RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE LAW AUTHORIZING 4,000 INCLUDED THE 2,000 ALREADY AUTHORIZED, OR WHETHER IT MEANT A TOTAL OF 6,000. THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION QUICKLY SETTLED THAT POINT BY INTERPRETING IT TO MEAN A TOTAL OF 4,000 BEDS. THE

JUN 26 1965

8

QUESTION IS ACADEMIC AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE ONLY 534 OF THESE BEDS HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED TO DATE. IN RECENT TESTIMONY, THE CHIEF MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION ADVISED THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS THAT THE FINAL THOUSAND BEDS WOULD NOT BE IN OPERATION UNTIL THE 1968 FISCAL YEAR.

NOW, MY FRIENDS, JUST HOW THESE ITEMS ADD UP, I'LL LEAVE TO YOUR GOOD JUDGEMENT. IT SEEMS CRYSTAL CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT IF WE ARE TO PREVENT THE EROSION OF THE SPLENDID VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL SYSTEM AS WE KNOW IT TODAY -- IF WE ARE TO OVERCOME THE "FOOTDRAGGING" IF YOU WILL, ON THE NURSING CARE PROGRAM, THAT YOUR TALENTS AND THOSE OF THE CONGRESS WILL HAVE TO BE DEVOTED TO AN INTENSIVE STUDY OF THE ENTIRE PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL SYSTEM. HOW MANY BEDS ARE NEEDED? SHOULD THERE BE AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM NUMBER OF OPERATING BEDS ESTABLISHED BY LAW? SHOULD SOME OF THE EXISTING FACILITIES BE CONVERTED TO GERIATRIC OR NURSING CARE UNITS, THUS REDUCING THE COSTS OF OPERATING THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM? IS THERE A PLACE IN THE SUN FOR THE SMALL, WELL OPERATED, RURAL LOCATED VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL? THESE AND OTHER QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED. I AM HOPEFUL THAT OUR COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS WILL ADDRESS ITSELF TO THESE PROBLEMS AND I SINCERELY URGE THE DAV TO GIVE US THE BENEFIT OF YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS SUBJECT.

AS YOU MAY HAVE GUESSED, A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF OUR TIME THIS YEAR HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO THE SITUATION CREATED BY THE

JUN 26 1965

9

ADMINISTRATION'S CLOSING ORDER OF JANUARY 13TH. A SIDE EFFECT OF OUR PREOCCUPATION WITH THIS SUBJECT HAS BEEN THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MOVE TO THE CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION THAT MERITS THE CONCERN OF CONGRESS. THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS HAS ALREADY REPORTED 15 BILLS. THIRTEEN OF THESE HAVE BEEN PASSED BY THE HOUSE AND ARE NOW AWAITING ACTION BY THE SENATE. TWO OF THEM ARE PENDING IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THE DAV ARE H.R. 205, H.R. 206, AND H.R. 208. H.R. 205 WOULD AUTHORIZE AN INCREASE IN THE WAR ORPHANS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ALLOWANCE PAID TO THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF DECEASED OR PERMANENTLY DISABLED SERVICE CONNECTED VETERANS. THE PRESENT MONTHLY ALLOWANCE FOR FULL-TIME INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING WOULD BE CHANGED FROM \$110.00 to \$130.00.

H.R. 206 WOULD PROVIDE A REALISTIC COST-OF-LIVING INCREASE IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TRAINING ALLOWANCE FOR SERVICE CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS. THE NEW MONTHLY RATE FOR FULL-TIME INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING FOR VETERANS WITH NO DEPENDENTS IS \$100.00; \$135.00 with ONE DEPENDENT AND \$145.00 WITH TWO OR MORE DEPENDENTS. THESE RATE INCREASES ARE LONG OVERDUE SINCE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN INCREASED SINCE 1948.

H.R. 208 WOULD EXTEND THE TIME LIMITS FOR PURSUING VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TRAINING FOR SERIOUSLY DISABLED SERVICE CONNECTED VETERANS TO JUNE 30, 1975 OR TEN YEARS AFTER THE GENERAL TERMINATION DATE. AT THE PRESENT TIME, VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MAY NOT BE

JUN 26 1965

10

AFFORDED AFTER NINE YEARS FOLLOWING THE VETERAN'S SEPARATION FROM MILITARY SERVICE.

A SUBJECT OF VITAL INTEREST TO THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS IS, OF COURSE, COMPENSATION INCREASE FOR SERVICE CONNECTED DISABILITIES. AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS RECENTLY CONCLUDED PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THIS SUBJECT. REPRESENTATIVES OF YOUR ORGANIZATION VERY ABLY MADE KNOWN THE VIEWS OF THE DAV IN SUPPORT OF COMPENSATION INCREASES. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS HAS INFORMED ME THAT HE EXPECTS THE COMMITTEE TO ACT FAVORABLY UPON A COMPENSATION INCREASE BILL IN THE NEAR FUTURE. I AM CONFIDENT THAT SUCH A BILL WOULD PROCEED SPEEDILY THROUGH THE HOUSE AND SENATE.

IF I WERE ASKED TO NAME THE SINGLE BILL THAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO VETERANS, I WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO DO SO. I CAN, HOWEVER, THINK OF A BILL THAT IS SELDOM MENTIONED BUT IT PLAYS AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THE OVERALL CONSIDERATION OF VETERANS BENEFITS. I AM SPEAKING, OF COURSE, OF THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATION BILL. THIS IS THE LEGISLATION WHICH AUTHORIZES THE FUNDS TO OPERATE THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AND TO PAY THE DIRECT VETERANS BENEFITS. THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1966, WHICH BEGINS ON JULY 1ST OF THIS YEAR, TOTALS MORE THAN 5-1/2 BILLION DOLLARS. MOST OF THIS WILL BE SPENT FOR DIRECT VETERAN BENEFITS. ONE BILLION 197 MILLION DOLLARS WILL BE EXPENDED TO OPERATE THE MEDICAL AND HOSPITAL PROGRAM. FOUR BILLION 142 MILLION DOLLARS WILL BE PAID DIRECTLY TO VETERANS, WIDOWS AND

JUN 26 1965

11

CHILDREN FOR COMPENSATION OR PENSION. THIRTY-SIX MILLION DOLLARS WILL BE PAID FOR READJUSTMENT BENEFITS. MOST OF THIS IS FOR THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING ALLOWANCE FOR THE VETERANS AND WAR ORPHANS WHO ARE TAKING EDUCATION AND TRAINING. WE WILL SPEND ABOUT 87 MILLION 585 THOUSAND DOLLARS NEXT YEAR FOR CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, AND MODERNIZATION OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL SYSTEM.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TAKES A GENEROUS ATTITUDE TOWARD ITS VETERANS. THE PUBLIC IS CONTRIBUTING FIVE CENTS OUT OF EACH TAXPAYER'S DOLLAR FOR VETERANS BENEFITS AND HAS SHOWN A WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THE EXTENSIVE HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL PROGRAM, COMPENSATION PAYMENTS TO THE DISABLED AND SURVIVORS OF SERVICE CONNECTED DEAD, AND PENSIONS FOR THOSE VETERANS WHO, BECAUSE OF VERY LOW INCOME, AGE AND DISABILITY, ARE IN NEED.

THE PHILOSOPHY THAT HAS DOMINATED THE THINKING OF THE CONGRESS FOR MANY YEARS IS THAT AS THE WAR YEARS FADE IN THE DISTANCE AND THERE IS LESS PUBLIC INTEREST IN VETERANS PROGRAMS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THESE PROGRAMS BE REASONABLE AND ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC. ^{There} ~~There~~ IS NOT SUFFICIENT MONEY TO DO ALL OF THE THINGS THAT EVERYONE WANTS TO DO. THEREFORE, IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO PROCEED WITH AN ORDER OF PRIORITY. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THE HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL PROGRAM MUST COME FIRST. COMPENSATION FOR THE SERVICE CONNECTED DISABLED AND SURVIVORS OF SERVICE CONNECTED DEAD MUST RECEIVE A HIGH PRIORITY, SINCE ^{IT} ~~THE~~ SEEMS UNQUESTIONABLE

JUN 26 1965

12

THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRST OBLIGATION IS TO THIS GROUP. NONSERVICE CONNECTED PENSION PROGRAMS SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO AGING VETERANS AND WIDOWS AND THOSE SERIOUSLY DISABLED, EVEN THOUGH FROM A NON-SERVICE CONNECTED CAUSE, BUT THESE PROGRAMS MUST BE KEPT IN BOUNDS. AND IN PROPER RELATION TO THE SERVICE CONNECTED PROGRAMS. IF THEY ARE NOT, THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE OF VETERANS BENEFITS WILL BE PLACED IN JEOPARDY.

IT APPEARS TO ME THAT VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS ARE STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS.

ONE ROAD LEADS TO THE PERPETUATION OF A SOUND PROGRAM OF VETERANS BENEFITS --- ADEQUATE COMPENSATION FOR THE SERVICE CONNECTED DISABLED AND THE SURVIVORS OF OUR WAR DEAD; HOSPITALIZATION FOR SERVICE CONNECTED AND INDIGENT NONSERVICE CONNECTED VETERANS; PENSIONS FOR NEEDY AND DISABLED NONSERVICE CONNECTED VETERANS. DOWN THE OTHER ROAD LIES THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS GREAT BENEFITS PROGRAM. I AM SUPREMELY CONFIDENT THAT YOUR GREAT ORGANIZATION WILL EXERCISE THE KIND OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT WILL LEAD US DOWN THE FIRST ROAD.
