

The DAV must now turn its attention to improved benefits that are in prospect rather than with those benefits which have already been secured. We are confident that this Commission, which carries with it the prestige of President Johnson's mandate, will respond with the support required to fulfill our hopes and expectations.

Mr. Chairman, it is sometimes said that Presidential Study Commissions, by their very nature, travel a difficult road; that if their purpose is not merely to ratify decisions already made, then it is to deal with problems so perplexing and sticky that the White House has been unable to make the decisions and so is "passing the buck."

It is also said that Commission memberships are carefully balanced among different interest groups, and that frequently the diversity only guarantees a conflict. In short, Presidential Commissions are viewed suspiciously as creatures of the executive branch.

The DAV wishes to say at once, Mr. Chairman, that no such charges can be directed to this Veterans Advisory Panel. There is no diversity of interest here, since each member of the Commission is, himself, a veteran with a long and dedicated history of service to the cause of America's veterans. Each has a wealth of background experience that fits him perfectly to perform the task for which the Commission was created. Indeed, we know of no group that has been more devoted, more conscientious, or more qualified to undertake the study than the members of this Advisory Commission. We are certain that the President will accept its findings and recommendations which, we firmly believe, will have a profound effect upon the whole structure of veterans programs.

We come now to the specific recommendations which we shall put forward for the Commission's consideration. However, before doing so and in order to place our proposals in proper perspective, I think it appropriate to mention here that the Disabled American Veterans was founded on the principle that the Nation's first duty to veterans is the rehabilitation of those who were honorably discharged during a period of war and who were wounded, injured, or otherwise disabled by reason of such service. Included in the term "during a period of war" are veterans whose disabilities were incurred as a result of armed conflict, or while engaged in extra-hazardous duty, including service under conditions simulating war.

To fulfill its function, the DAV strives to bring about the enactment of legislation to meet the national obligation for improving the physical, social, and economic well-being of men and women who sacrificed themselves for America. Our attention is primarily focused upon legislative objectives which seek to enhance opportunities for employment and proper job placement so that the remaining ability of the disabled veteran is used in the most productive way; to provide expert hospital and medical care to restore disabled veterans to a state of good health; and to provide adequate and just compensation for service-incurred disabilities.

Our principal goal, then, is to restore the handicapped veteran to as good a position in civilian life as he would have enjoyed had he not been disabled in the service of his country. The matter of adequate compensation applies also to the widows, children, and dependent parents of those who died from service-connected causes.