

creased to a point commensurate with that of his able-bodied, wage-earning contemporaries.

It may be argued, with a degree of merit, that the compensation increases described above were reasonable since they were granted as a means of offsetting in some measure the rise in living costs. However, we think it fair to say that the compensation rates for the unemployable service-connected veteran were set far too low from the very beginning. Hence, the increase in rates to cover the corresponding rise in living costs did not really provide for adequate compensation payments.

The present compensation rates for this particular veteran are in fact so markedly deficient they have served only to place him in an actual condition of poverty.

It would appear that wage increases and concurrent increases in the costs of goods and services represent an unending cycle. These increases invariably result in less dollar value, less buying power, and a further strain on resources already too meager to provide more than the bare necessities of living for this veteran and his family.

Moreover, in view of the costs associated with the Great Society projects and the costs for financing the war in Vietnam, it can be realistically predicted that the Consumer Price Index will continue to increase. Veterans who are living solely on disability compensation payments stand to suffer most as the dollar's buying power diminishes. The net effect of this will be to push the veteran to a still lower step on the economic scale.

We realize, Mr. Chairman, that there have been numerous and varied requests made to the Commission during the course of your regional meetings. We realize also that priorities in these matters must be set.

We believe that serious study and thoughtful consideration of the facts set forth above will lead the Commission to give the highest priority to recommendations for well-deserved increases in the rates of service-connected disability compensation.

Another DAV recommendation on the subject of compensation calls for a long-delayed increase in single statutory awards based on service-connected disability. It seems rather odd that the rates for these special awards have not been increased in the past 15 years. On July 1, 1952, there was only a small increase (\$5 per month) over the rate which had prevailed since September 1, 1946. In short, there has been a \$5 increase in 21 years.

The conditions which are the basis for these special awards include disabilities that can never be adequately compensated for in terms of monetary benefits. Not only is physical inability impaired but the traumatic effect of these losses has been tremendously adverse for many individuals. Included in this category are the anatomical loss or loss of use of one foot; of a creative organ; or one hand; or both buttocks; or blindness of one eye; or complete organic aphonia with constant inability to communicate by speech; or deafness of both ears. In addition to these conditions, there is a statutory award for arrested tuberculosis. We believe that further consideration to the facts of this matter by the Commission will lead to recommendations for increases in the present rates by approximately 55 percent.