

Mr. Houston. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

It is an honor for me to have had the opportunity to serve on this Commission. This report that we are presenting to you this morning is a digest of recommendations of testimony that was received throughout the country from the hopelessness in the eyes of the 100-percent disabled veteran as he appealed for what he felt was a need for increases in benefits to that of the less disabled veterans.

We could not get from the witnesses an amount but each of them looked to us earnestly, appealingly, in their testimony, as you will find in this digest. It is the digest of the testimony from widows in appealing their needs, from the aged veterans whose pathos in their tone of voice indicated they seemed to feel that at last their prayers have been answered and they could talk to someone. I say this is a digest. I think the words might be well studied by all people, and I know they will be by this distinguished committee.

Mr. Chairman of the committee, I think two of the by-products coming out of this Commission's study is the opportunity for the various veteran's bodies of the country to sit down together.

The past commanders knew the problems which they were confronted with in their organization, representing the older group, some of my colleagues representing some old and some younger groups. But as these gentlemen and ladies sat down together and heard each other, they increasingly changed their tone of appeal and their testimony.

At the end the tone was for the needs of veterans and not for specific groups.

The other thing, and I think the important thing, that will bear fruit in the years to come is the very fact that these people could come to someone. There seemed to be a fear at first, which is prevalent throughout our populus, that the Veterans' Administration or the Congress and some of us as individuals that they dare not approach.

But just the opportunity to sit down and talk and tell their stories has meant much, I feel, to the veterans of our country. I am sure it will and it is our hope that it will reflect in the moral of veterans in the years to come.

We know that we have not answered all the questions. We have deliberated in coming to the wording of this report long and diligently. Mr. Chairman of the committee, there is not a "yes man" on this group. As you have the time to read the testimony of the meetings of this group, you will find that each member spoke out for his point and in many instances this is a compromise on the democratic way of doing things.

We do present it to you, and to the Nation, as a digest of the voice coming from the old and the young, from the boys who are now fighting for us in Vietnam to those who climbed San Juan Hill and all those in between.

Again I repeat it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to serve on this Commission, which I feel will make its mark in the future of veterans' thinking for many years.

Thank you.

Mr. McCurdy. Thank you.