

opportunity to exercise the benefit is unequal and will become more so as cemeteries are filled. If the rate of burial in national cemeteries should continue as in fiscal years 1963-65, all developed gravesites will be filled by 1974 and the now undeveloped acreage would be exhausted before the year 2000. But the 1963-65 rate cannot be maintained because of the imminent closing of some cemeteries, while others will continue in operation many years beyond the year 2000.

The present jurisdictional arrangements involve four agencies of the government only one of which, the Battle Monuments Commission, has a primary mission dealing with cemetery management. Proposals have been and continue to be made that the four systems be merged under a single management. To the Commission, the Veterans Administration, which is organized to administer the affairs of veterans, is the most logical choice for administering cemetery activities related to the interment of veterans.

The Commission is pleased to note that on October 20, 1967, the House of Representatives transferred oversight of all Federal cemeteries where veterans are, or may be, buried, in this country and abroad, from the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs to the Veterans' Affairs Committee, with the exception of those few national cemeteries administered by the Secretary of the Interior as part of the National Park System. The Commission believes that the oversight of veterans cemeteries by the same Congressional body which deals with all other veterans legislative matters is distinctly a forward step.

The Commission fully endorses the President's message of January 30, 1968, and believes that the recommendations contained herein fulfill the President's request for positive proposals to assure that veterans have an opportunity to be buried in a national cemetery near their home. The Commission also realizes that the question of entitlement for a cemetery plot cannot be isolated completely from the question of the current burial allowance. The Commission firmly believes that the existence of veterans burial allowances should not be compromised by the existence of any other burial or death benefit, public or private.

While recognizing the progress that has been made, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

(1) that the entire Federal cemetery function, with exception of the Department of Interior cemeteries, be reassigned to the Veterans Administration;