

Mr. ROBERTSON. I would suggest this: That we meet with Mr. Pickens, representing the association, and a representative of the Veterans' Administration to explore means of accomplishing the end that you have just suggested.

Mr. ROBERTS. It is too late for us now to change the contract made in the past. Would you suggest a change in the contractual procedure for the future? Would that make any difference now? Would that be helpful?

Mr. ROBERTSON. I would have to see the proposal. I do not know whether a simple modification of the terms of the contract would in any way change the legal position with respect to application of the act.

Mr. ROBERTS. If there are such suggestions which should be made would you make those suggestions either to us or to the VA? If we can do it without all this hullabaloo we would all be better off.

Thank you.

One more thing. It is just a matter of how you tell us to do it. If we have to, do it ~~harder and harder and harder~~ ^{sooner} or later, it may well be ~~sooner~~ ^{sooner} so long?

MR. ROBERTSON. I would assume we didn't have the question brought to our attention until we receive Mr. Pickens' letter representing the association in January.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I notice you say you have not ruled on medicare, either.

Mr. ROBERTSON. That is correct.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. Do you have any idea how long it will take before you get to that?

Mr. ROBERTSON. We are hoping to obtain enough information from HEW to permit a decision.

Mr. SATTERFIELD. I would certainly think we should have retroactive liability when they are in a position of possibly getting socked with this thing. I have had serious misgivings about continuing with this program.

Mr. ROBERTSON. If I may clarify this in relation to Mr. Roberts' remarks. What I suggest might be accomplished through a meeting by representatives of the association, the VA, and the Labor Department. This would relate to this retroactivity question and not the solution of whether or not the exemption will be granted. This would be contingent on the record of the hearings.