

ought to try and see if we can't utilize some of the Federal lands that are now scattered across the country that are not used.

I sometimes, in driving across the country, see these huge pieces of land at highway intersections in the cloverleaf patterns where there are acres and acres of land not being used that belongs to the Federal Government. I am not too sure that we couldn't give some thought to developing these areas into small cemeteries. I don't think we must have these huge things. I think they can be smaller and closer to home and closer to the community.

Have you any views on that?

Mr. FERRINO. In the testimony Amvets has taken the position and we have posed it before this committee, where we stipulate that available Government lands near military installations that are not being used and some land adjacent to VA hospital installations that are not presently being used might be utilized.

In many instances various State lands have been offered in various parts of the country for this specific purpose. So that I don't believe that the major consideration is the initial cost of the land acquisition. I believe that with our concerted effort and concern with the problem that it could be readily implemented by utilizing just these facilities that are available and I don't believe that it would cost a great deal of money—possibly in some areas where land is not available, but in many areas where it is we could probably utilize these facilities.

I concur with your remarks that there are many areas where we could utilize existing plots of land that are owned by the Federal Government just for this purpose and they don't have to be great acres and acres of land. They could be smaller plots adjacent to areas of population where the need is great.

Mr. PUCINSKI. As you know, the pressure constantly continues against our VA hospitals. Last year you will recall Secretary Cohen recommended that we might transfer the VA hospitals to HEW. We keep seeing recurrence of these demands. One of the reasons, of course, is the cost of maintaining these hospitals.

I have been a severe critic of the fact that Blue Cross and Blue Shield does not pay to our veterans' hospitals. It occurs to me that when a veteran is in the Blue Cross-Blue Shield Plan and he or his employer are paying into the plan, when he takes advantage of a veterans' hospital because he prefers to be in a veterans' hospital, I can think of no logical reason why Blue Cross and Blue Shield should not pay the veterans hospital the same fee they would pay to a private hospital if the veteran chose to go to a private hospital. I think this would bring in a substantial amount of revenue. I think it would ease a great deal of the pressure on these demands to phase out the VA hospitals. I was wondering if you have any thoughts on that?

Mr. FERRINO. I was privileged to have listened to your views on this particular topic before and I concur that the VA hospital and the cost incurred in the treatment of a veteran in a VA hospital should not be exempted from these insurance contracts written by the Blue Cross-Blue Shield administrators. But I think it would have to be implemented with specific, either Federal, State, or local legislation, to stipulate that if an individual has such a plan, that that plan would not be exempted from the payment of the regular fee, which would be accorded to a private institution, and I think it would be possibly a step