

a very particular sense when the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, in a report to the President last July, recommended that he (the Secretary) be made the President's sole and chief adviser on Federal health policy, and that he be made responsible for coordinating all Federal health programs.

In another demonstration of a deep and genuine concern for the needs and interest of the Nation's sick and disabled veterans, the chairman of this committee took swift and direct exception to the Secretary's recommendation. As a result, both the Secretary of HEW and the White House responded with assurance that the VA medical program would maintain its independent status. In this regard, the DAV continues to favor centralization of functions concerning veterans' programs. We would like to see all veterans' programs administered by the VA and the VA only, with a Cabinet position for the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. Chairman, I think it hardly necessary to say that the DAV gave its full and steadfast support to you in these efforts. This we will continue to do with all our resources at all times in the future, whenever the need demands it.

In previous appearances before this committee, we have outlined our position with respect to the national cemetery system as it is currently operated. We have constantly urged—as we do now—that the operational jurisdiction and control of the system be transferred from the Department of the Army to the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. Legislation to bring this about is presently under consideration by your committee.

The problem of the national cemeteries has been recognized by many farsighted members of this committee, and we appreciate the weight of the decisions to be made in the preparation of enabling legislation to accomplish a satisfactory solution. The legislation now before you, if enacted, would, in our opinion, serve to eliminate the confusing and uncertain conditions currently associated with the cemetery program and would bring about the establishment of a unified and orderly system.

I am certain that I do not have to go into the many reasons for the need of early decisions on proposed national cemetery sites to avoid inflated real estate costs, or into allied reasons to expedite selection and acquisition of cemetery locations.

The officers and the resources of our national organization are ready upon call, to assist in helping to resolve this urgent problem.

Mr. Chairman, our organization has consistently maintained as a basic policy that the Government has a paramount obligation to provide education and vocational training to those who incurred disabilities in defense of our country. Several of our national convention resolutions relate to this significant subject.

Presently, any veteran who served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era may be furnished vocational rehabilitation on account of a service-connected disability, if such disability is rated for compensation purposes as 30 percent or more; or if less than 30 percent, is clearly shown to have caused a "pronounced employment handicap." This 30 percent statutory restriction was not included in the vocational rehabilitation programs for World War II or Korean