

circumstances in which hospital beds are free, I think that your proposal that the hospital care be extended to widows and children of veterans who died of service-connected disabilities, or wives whose husbands have total disabilities, that the extension is not only in the best interests of the wives and children thus covered but also in the best interests of preserving the highest level of medical care.

Obviously physicians are like others—in order to improve their service they must use their talents; they must do it in a comprehensive, overall sense, not merely in terms of one specialty or another.

I should like to say that the chairman of this committee, Mr. Teague, has given me an opportunity to visit quite a few veterans hospitals. I would like to report to you that the caliber of medical care that I have found has been extremely impressive, and it should be a source of some consolation that outstanding men choose to serve in Veterans' Administration hospitals. I think this is a tribute to the Veterans' Administration. I think that it is extremely important that this caliber of service be preserved.

I should like to pass on one rather disturbing note that I also meet in my travels because obviously the purpose of the DAV is more than to come here and present a program, even though it is an extremely important and worthy program. I think your purpose also lies on the grassroots level back in the cities and towns in this country. I feel that the words of one doctor were so impressive and moving to me that they could well be passed on to you with merit. I asked one of the leading doctors in the Miami Veterans Hospital what he expected to be the future needs in terms of medical care for the veteran coming back from Vietnam, what kinds of cases did he think would occupy the hospital, would there be any changes.

He said, "Yes, I can see a change coming." He said that "Of course, in our population we are recognizing mental illness more than ever before. This is growing. It is a very major problem in the country."

He prophesied, unfortunately, that this will be a problem to the returning veteran from Vietnam, one that is rather unique: first of all, because the Vietnam veteran has known a very difficult and unusually hard terrain in which to serve his country and because he has faced great obstacles as other veterans have, but unusual ones; secondly, because of the fact that there is a division of sentiment in the country, this veteran will come back with more questions in his mind about the value of his service and the worth of what he has done. These factors will contribute to whatever other problems he may have of a physical nature.

This doctor prophesied that we would have more mental illness, and this increase would be a great problem for the veterans hospitals. I suggest that it is not merely a problem for the veterans hospitals but for the veterans organizations which have a real responsibility of service to these young men in every city and town. I hope that your organization will go to the fullest extent in every community to seek out these people because they need what you can give them.

I will say that we members of this committee privileged to serve here need what you have given us this morning, the insight of those who are close to the problems of veterans all over this country.

May I promise you that we will heed your proposals carefully.

Mr. SHEIRBON. Thank you.