

me a great deal in returning to civilian life. We in AVC have supported the Korean GI bill, the cold war GI bill, and the current Vietnam GI bill. We have endorsed all legislation to assist the veteran take his place in society—to go back to school, or to find a job, or to obtain decent housing.

The AVC has been very much concerned that the disabled veterans—those who have made the greatest sacrifices—receive adequate rates of compensation. We have advocated a review of the rates of compensation for service-connected disabilities and have urged that inequities be removed. We have urged higher rates for those most seriously disabled—in keeping with increased costs of living. AVC maintains that this country has no higher obligation than to insure for severely disabled veterans every advantage a grateful nation can give.

I now turn to our basic philosophy. Our testimony carries with it three areas of consideration:

One the philosophy of AVC and the recognition of two bills.

I would like to say that we have in our recommendations the establishment of a permanent review board which would certainly have the expertise to take care of the specific details. What we would like to emphasize before this body is the philosophy of the American Veterans Committee, an organization 25 years old, which came out of World War II.

The animating philosophy of the American Veterans Committee has been since its founding during World War II, to view the veteran as first, a citizen of the Nation, and second, as a veteran. The achievement of economic security for veterans through sound economic planning for all citizens, rather than through special grants or favors to veterans is basic AVC policy. By the same reasoning, we believe that he, or she, retains the unalienable status of a citizen while in uniform. This principle buttresses our views of military codes of justice and practices.

Our “citizens first, veterans second” view is founded on the conviction that military service is a patriotic duty required of free men in order to safeguard their liberties, and that indeed it is a duty which continues, in modified form, for each of us until the end of our lives.

We categorically reject the notion that a person is eligible for endless benefits simply because he or she wore a uniform.

We are struck by the fact that veterans, their dependents, and survivors, comprise 48 percent of the Nation's population and this figure is rising. VA benefits therefore are potentially available to almost half of the population. With this large and rising population, the most careful thinking is needed about a veteran's benefits program that would consider the legitimate benefits of the veterans' population in the context of the Nation's needs and goals.

With the expansion of social legislation to include the great majority of citizens, however, there is a legitimate question whether or not veterans should be treated as a separate class. The AVC believes that beyond the readjustment assistance that is the veterans' due, they should not be set apart from the rest of the U.S. society. Exception, of course, should be made for the badly disabled who should be enabled to maintain a reasonable standard of living.

The AVC's support of the GI bill does not conflict with the above philosophy. The GI bill, one of the most imaginative programs ever devised, wrote its success on the pages of our history. What it did for