

the Nation, through what it did for the veterans, may never be totally evaluated.

A bold new look in style with the times is needed now. What was good as a philosophy for a past veterans' program and code of military procedures is not necessarily good for the present or the future. Veterans' programs must be fair to the rest of the Nation as well as to the veterans. The same must be said of a draft program as well as procedures affecting the person during military service. We are exploring this latter point in our already-begun national conference on "Human Rights of the Man in Uniform." What is needed is a standard of equity and justice against which all demands can be measured and which can serve as a yardstick for the President and the Congress.

We presented this viewpoint to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Veterans Benefits in October 1967 during its hearings in Washington, D.C. May I call the committee's attention to our concluding remarks:

Our final word is that it seems to us that a bold new look in style with the times is needed now. Veterans programs must be fair to the veterans and fair to the rest of the nation. What is needed is a standard of equity and justice against which all demands can be measured and which can serve as a yardstick for the President and the Congress.

With recognition that the veterans budget is \$6.7 billion, which is the fifth largest item in the national budget, and furthermore, that today 48 percent of the total population is composed of veterans, survivors and their dependents or immediate families, the need for a review of veterans programs and a drawing up of tight and just standards outside of political and emotional stresses becomes essential.

Accordingly, the American Veterans Committee suggests to this panel that one of its recommendations should be the creation of a permanent Veterans Program Review Board, an independent group which would be set up outside the day-to-day operations of the Veterans Administration and would be composed of leading citizens not directly connected with veterans affairs. With its own independent research arm, the Board could make a continuing analysis of the needs of veterans placing these needs into a program fair to the veterans and fair to the citizenry.

A philosophic underpinning for any new veterans program could well be taken from the 1956 President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions Report: "Veterans benefits are a means of equalizing significant sacrifices that result directly from wartime military services . . . Military service in time of war or peace is an obligation of citizenship and should not be considered inherently a basis for future Government benefits. Our national survival requires that every citizen do his part and make whatever contribution is required of him."

In conclusion, we would summarize our recommendations for a philosophy of veterans' assistance as follows:

(1) The severely disabled should receive compensation sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living.

(2) Upon return to civilian life, servicemen should receive the assistance they need through such measures as the GI Bill, to help them readjust to society.

(3) Other veterans' assistance programs should be reviewed and re-evaluated in the context of the new social legislation which applies to all citizens.

(4) An independent Permanent Veterans Program Review Board should continually analyze the needs of veterans and recommend legislation fair to the veteran and the country.

Finally, we would like to add that we wish to emphasize that all veterans benefits must be applied and administered nationally without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.

We bring this statement to the attention of the committee because we concurred very strongly with the chairman of the Advisory Commission, Robert McCurdy, when he called for a formulation of a philosophy of veterans' benefits during the August 1967 hearings. The basic philosophy of AVC has been that the chief purpose of a veterans'