

March 17, 1950

Veterans Fight Halloran Move

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senators and assemblymen and later "snowball" the drive so that the entire city supports the move, Balbach said.

ACCORDING to Balbach, Louis A. Drago, state department commander; Maurice Stender, department adjutant; George A. Mead, department rehabilitation director, and Joseph Piccirrello, deputy city welfare commissioner and department rehabilitation chairman, planned to see Governor Dewey last night in an attempt to convince him the state executive that the state should renew the federal lease.

Balbach expressed the sentiments of the group, stating, "We're not taking this thing sitting down by any means, even if a number of public officials said nothing could be done."

He said that last September there were about 5,000 VA hospital beds in the city, and that they have been gradually decreased.

Bemoaning the loss of 1,100 beds if Halloran closed, Balbach added that the "load is increasing in the number of vets who need hospitalization."

THE LEGION leader charged, "We're going back to the days after World War I when during the first five years after the war more veterans died on the streets because of the lack of hospital beds than were actually killed in the war itself."

In answer to critics who might say "why not go along with the state and use private hospitals," Balbach said, "There are apparently waiting lists in private hospitals too."

Balbach, who originally introduced a move for the retention of Halloran during the war, said that he is still not yet convinced that he is fighting a losing battle.

He thought that "the citizens will be behind us in this fight in which we're going without kid gloves and not bound by regulations." Balbach explained that the council had no by-laws, but was just interested in keeping Halloran.

ACCORDING TO Balbach, the "coordinated team of personnel at

Halloran will be passed to the four winds" by the state taking over the institution.

The Legionnaire said that if the former plans of the VA had been adhered to in keeping Halloran until a new VA hospital is built in lower Manhattan, then the employees of Halloran could move over as a "solid unit."

He warned that the Brooklyn Hospital near Fort Hamilton would not be ready in time, and that the Bronx institution is overloaded now.

In attempting to explain why the state refuses to renew its lease to the VA, Balbach said, "We don't know whether the fault lies in Albany or Washington."

In a brief statement, Mezger said of the situation, "It's the rottenest thing that ever came down the pike. We're going all out against it—right clean to national headquarters in Washington."

SPEAKING for the Spanish War Veterans, Gaylor said, "We were very much put out about it, and as a veterans' organization fought to have this retained when the Army originally left it."

"We'll certainly continue to fight for its retention now. A loss of a \$6,000,000 payroll on Staten Island is not easy for Staten Island to take."

Daly, who said that he was surprised at the move, reaffirmed Balbach's stand, stating, "The American Legion is opposed to the closing at this time and will fight with every effort to have it remain open as a VA hospital until a new VA hospital is opened in Manhattan."

A STATEMENT for the Catholic War Veterans and Eugene Higgins, county commander, was made by Dr. Thomas Larocca, past county commander.

"I think the hospital should be retained in view of the fact that for the past seven years it certainly has maintained a good program for the rehabilitation of veterans," he declared.

However, he said he thought that if the hospital must close down, the veterans in the other boroughs and communities would "do their best for the veteran patients."

Major Charles J. Spielman, commander of Austin H. Evans Chapter, Disabled American Veterans, stated that he hoped that veterans would unite and appeal to political leaders.

Spielman said, "The disabled veterans will join their comrades in doing everything possible to have Halloran restored as a further domicile for the treatment of veterans."

A little weight was added to the apparent "lost cause" last night when three units—Borough President of Richmond Post, American Legion, and Snee and Richmond County Posts, VFW — went on record protesting the removal of the hospital.

Fight to Keep Halloran Mapped by Vet Leaders

Representatives Learn of Plan From Hospital

By RICHARD FORSTER

WITH the closing of Halloran VA Hospital in June virtually a certainty, leaders of the major Island veterans organizations last night banded together to make a last ditch stand to "save the institution for the Island."

Meeting in the hospital's conference room behind closed doors the representatives were first "officially" informed of the closing proceedings by Dr. Alfred P. Upshur, manager.

Kenneth S. Covey, assistant manager, later said that "the meeting was a matter of courtesy to the service organizations to acquaint them with the closing of Halloran."

Under the direction of Leo D'A. Balbach, Second District commander of the American Legion, the representatives of the various groups

then were formed into the United Veterans Council of Richmond for the Retention of Halloran VA Hospital.

RICHARD F. DALY, county commander of the legion, was named chairman and Balbach secretary.

Selected to the council were Cornelius Bregoff, past county Legion commander; Joseph Buckley, chef de gare of Richmond Voiture, 40 and 8; William L. Gaylor, county commander of the United Spanish War Veterans; Raymond S. Warshaw of the Disabled American Veterans; Rubin Goldwasser of the Jewish War Veterans; Anthony Hewang of the Catholic War Veterans; James P. Mezger, county Veterans of Foreign Wars commander; Bernard Quinn of the Army and Navy Union, and Robert A. Patterson of the Marine Corps League.

This group will meet Sunday with a similar body in Brooklyn to plan "Halloran retention strategy."

United, the two groups hope to get the backing of all the Brooklyn and Island congressmen, state

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