

Gov. Dewey assure me a few hours ago, that within three weeks he'll know the detailed answers to the problems developing from the threatened extinction of sick and wounded from Halloran VA Hospital. "I don't know the answers now," said Gov. Dewey, "but with the session coming to a close, I'll be able to examine the entire situation and know what I'm talking about."

"You are familiar with the picture, as it involves the State of New York. What is now Halloran was built to house mentally deficient children, but the state yielded the buildings and grounds to the Federal Government because of World War II. Since the end of the war, the state has taken back, roughly, half of Halloran for the children. We proposed to take back half of the remaining half, but that proved impractical because you can't divide the kitchen facilities in that fashion."

"I have been told," continued Gov. Dewey, "that the Veterans' Administration has adequate facilities, that is sufficient unused beds, in the metropolitan area, to take care of Halloran wounded. But until I investigate this, carefully, I don't know if that is correct. At any rate, I'll call you or you call me, in three weeks. In the meantime, we are trying desperately to improvise accommodations for unfortunate children."

Your reporter pointed out that families of veterans at Halloran would be further dislocated if men had to move to upstate areas. "I doubt that would be necessary," said Gov. Dewey, "but again, let me examine this. As to the fears expressed by the VA, about the breaking up the Halloran staff, it seems to me that by July 1 they could assemble a staff that would be more than adequate. But again, let me find out every detail, and then I will know the answers."

Confabs in Order

One of the most encouraging aspects of the battle to retain Halloran VA Hospital is the willingness of VA and state officials to confer on the matter.

Usually, by the time termination of an agreement is announced in the press, all hope of continued negotiations has ended.

In the Halloran issue, one might have expected Veterans Administration officials to sulk in their offices, rail against the state's decision and dispatch ailing veterans to other facilities throughout the state. And generally the first impression was that the state had said "get out" and that was how the matter was to rest.

But as long as state and VA officials are willing to discuss and confer over Halloran's status, there remains a chance for a solution.

This is not to say that Halloran will be retained or that even there is a good chance of it. But the road is not yet closed.

We still believe that the needs of the state Department of Mental Hygiene can be compromised with those of the VA.

The state's need can hardly be more pressing now than it was six months or a year ago. Undoubtedly many mentally defective children should be receiving hospital care, but perhaps some adjustment can be made in the full acquisition of the Willowbrook institution.

Unless a compromise is reached 1,300 patients at Halloran will be transferred to other facilities in the state, some of them at a considerable distance from their homes.

Discussion of Halloran's status covers much more than buildings and their control. Hundreds of lives will be affected, ailing veterans, mentally defective children and working personnel.

The decision cannot be based alone on dollars, numbers of buildings and statistics. There is a great human factor.

"Your lease is up, depart," may be applicable to a straight business enterprise, but Halloran presents greater problems than that.