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# RELUCTANT VA CHARTS HALLORAN TRANSFERS

**Dr. Upshur Says  
He Has No Orders  
To Halt Evacuation**

By JACK REYCRRAFT

With four wards at Halloran VA Hospital already empty, officials at the institution are planning to transfer an additional 60 to 80 patients next Tuesday to Fort Hamilton VA Hospital, Brooklyn, it was learned today.

Since March 16, when orders to have all patients out of the Island hospital by June 1 were received, Halloran's patient enrollment has slumped from 1,307 to 1,098, principally because no patients were admitted after the orders were promulgated.

Dr. Alfred P. Upshur, manager of Halloran, said late yesterday that he has received no official orders from Washington to halt the evacuation of patients to other VA facilities, and therefore must continue to transfer them in order to be sure of meeting the June 1 deadline. His statement was confirmed yesterday by a spokesman for Veterans Administrator Carl Gray in the capital.

Both the spokesman in Washington and Dr. Upshur declared that the VA is anxious to keep Halloran as a veterans' facility for two more years, and that they are still hopeful that the state can renew the federal lease on the buildings. But, for the convenience of the patients, Dr. Upshur said, transfers cannot all be deferred until the last minute.

Other developments in the Halloran situation were:

The Island's three state legislators said that Governor Thomas E. Dewey had not arranged to meet with them on the Halloran question by today — a deadline which he himself set just before the close of the legislative session two weeks ago. At that time, they said, Dewey told them and a roomful of legislators from the five boroughs that he would have definite word on whether Halloran's lease could be extended within ten days or two weeks, and would arrange a meeting at that time in Manhattan.

A spokesman for the VA administrator told a representative of the Advance in Washington today that despite all sorts of talk and conferences, the only "on the record" commitment the federal agency has from Dewey is a telegram dated March 11 notifying the VA to quit the hospital. He denied that any assurance had been given Congressman James J. Murphy that there would be no patients transferred pending Governor's Dewey's reconsideration of the possibility of extending the hospital's lease.

### No General Evacuation

Congressman Murphy said in Washington that he was told by Major O. W. Clarke, deputy VA administrator, yesterday that the government still is not moving any more patients out of Halloran than it can avoid pending word from Governor Dewey. He received an assurance, Murphy said, that there will be "no attempt at a general evacuation" from the hospital for the next five days.

The first group of patients, 16 in number, was transferred to the Fort Hamilton hospital yesterday. They were chronic cardiac and eye, ear, nose and throat cases. Those to be sent next Tuesday are chronic surgical cases of certain types.

Contrary to a statement yesterday from his office, Dr. Upshur said, the patients being transferred to the Brooklyn facility are all in the chronic or "long-stay" class. He estimated that by June 1 between 300 and 400 other patients at Halloran will have recovered and have been discharged. This means, he pointed out, that between 700 and 800 patients will actually be transferred to Fort Hamilton Hospital in the next two months.

### Goes by 'The Record'

"The Veterans Administration is operating on the basis of what is said on the record," a spokesman told The Advance's representative in Washington yesterday. "We cannot operate on private agreements or private opinions." He pointed out that Governor Dewey is fully familiar with the situation, because the VA has been negotiating directly with him since last October for renewal of the lease on the buildings occupied by Halloran Hospital.

Dr. Frederick MacCurdy, who resigned last week as head of the state Department of Mental Hygiene, had told the VA that the facilities are needed for the Willowbrook State school because the present facilities for care of the mentally deficient are operating at 30 to 50 per cent above maximum capacity, with inmates sleeping on mattresses on floors and in recreation units and hallways.

(Workers at Halloran and Island veteran groups charge that there are approximately 300 empty beds in the buildings now occupied by the state school.)

Clarke said that no orders for transfers of patients have been issued to the Halloran staff, because such action is left to local discretion.

"All the VA cares about," he added, "is that everyone gets out by June."

This is what Congressman Murphy interpreted as an indication that there would be no transfers pending Dewey's action. A spokesman for the VA said. He pointed out that no order has been issued to halt the transfers.

### June 30 is drawing closer. We have begun to do what we believe we have to do," the spokesman added.

Murphy said today that Clarke had assured him that the transfer of patients could be accomplished much more quickly, but that the VA is attempting to mark time as much as possible pending any possible action by Dewey.

Meanwhile, employees at Halloran were having their own troubles, and many of them were hoping that Dewey would not resort to delay instead of giving an outright answer on the possibility of renewing the lease, because delay would only increase their own indecision.

### State Jobs Scarce

Some workers scoffed at assurance that they will be able to find jobs at the state school. One of them said that Dr. Frank B. Glasser, assistant director of the state facility, had outlined the jobs and salaries available in a talk to a gathering of Halloran employees. Most of the jobs available, the worker said, were in the attendant and kitchen help class.

Even these workers, as well as professional people, he said, would face large cuts in pay, as well as longer hours, if they took state jobs. Halloran pays a registered nurse in the ordinary grade \$3,400 to \$4,200 a year on a 40-hour-week basis. For a 40-hour week, Willowbrook School pays a staff nurse \$2,484 to \$3,174. If she wants to work 48 hours, there is an extra 20 per cent (that's straight time) which brings the annual wage to \$2,981 to \$3,809.

Another rumor that Fort Hamilton Hospital wasn't accepting nurses over the age of 40 for transfer was scotched late yesterday by Miss Mary E. Frieden, chief nurse. "It's definitely untrue," she declared. "We already have many nurses over 40 working here, and we've accepted a large number of them by transfer."

Other workers who have applied for transfer to the new neuropsychiatric hospital at Peekskill, N. Y., which will open next month, claimed that they had been advised that if they weren't released in time by Halloran, their transfers would be voided.

### Protests Tactics

Dr. Upshur declared that he had contacted the manager of the Peekskill facility to protest use of such tactics by a personnel officer to "scare" Halloran workers, and said that there is no reason all transfers can't be effected without causing any inconvenience to the patients at Halloran.

The sooner the governor makes a decision, the easier it will be to continue Halloran as a VA facility, Dr. Upshur said. By the middle of next month, he estimated, about half of Halloran's personnel will be elsewhere, and if the lease is extended then it will be quite a job to rebuild an organization in a short time.

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