

2 Congressmen Back Vet Protest

By DON SHEARD

Heartened by efforts of State Legislators to stay their eviction, the 87 paralyzed veterans at Halloran Hospital today received pledges of support from two more Congressmen and an independent citizens committee.

The 87 paraplegics must vacate the Staten Island hospital by Feb. 15 and the Veterans Administration, ignoring wide protests, is transferring them far from homes and families to hospitals in Virginia, Massachusetts and the Bronx.

Smiles replaced the aura of gloom among the hopelessly crippled veterans when they learned of the protest resolution introduced in the Legislature, which calls on Congress, the Veterans Administration and Gov. Dewey to keep the paraplegics under cover in New York, instead of sending them out of the State.

Today, Reps. Victor L. Anfuso (D.), of Brooklyn, and Katherine St. George (R.), of Tuxedo Park, joined the six New York and New Jersey Congressmen, who have asked the Veterans Administration to explain why it is reneging on its promise that the paraplegics could remain at Halloran until Dec. 31, 1952.

Anfuso said:

"I am very sympathetic to the paraplegics in their desperate plight and am taking up the matter with the Veterans Administration."

PLEDGES SUPPORT.

Mrs. St. George sent this wire to the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Assn., 90 Park ave., which is spearheading the fight against the Halloran transfers:

"You may be sure I will support any measure to protect the rights and interests of the paralyzed veterans."

Public indignation was reflected in the action taken by two Brooklyn businessmen, Joseph Governale, a tax consultant, and Michael Badamo, an attorney, and a past American Legion Post Commander, both with offices at 178 Central ave.

With the consent of the paraplegics they formed the "Independent Committee for Paraplegic Rights" and are enlisting the aid of housewives, ex-GIs and businessmen.

The committee's first action was

the sending of identical telegram to Senators Ives and Lehman and 16 Congressmen from New York City. The wire said:

"We are appealing to you in behalf of the paraplegics of Halloran Hospital who are being transferred to hospitals in various states.

"These paraplegics at one time fought for you and us. Won't you now fight for them in order that they may remain in Halloran? We are certain that your efforts will insure justice for these gallant veterans."

What the transfer to Kingsbridge Hospital means to the men is dramatized in the case of ex-8th Air Force Lt. Walter Vukelic, 28, who was paralyzed from the waist down when his bomber crashed in England in 1944.

The same year a bullet from the gun of a Jap soldier severed the spine of Sgt. Charles Cahill, 30, in the South Pacific.

In their two years together at Halloran, an abiding friendship sprung up. They raised \$1,000 to furnish an apartment at nearby Grimes Hill, so they could enjoy a taste of home life while undergoing daily treatment at Halloran.

"SHOT THROUGH HEART."

"Everything we have planned has been shot through the heart," said Vukelic, whose parents are Mr. and Mrs. Marijan Vukelic of Brooklyn. Cahill comes from Rumford, Me.

"We planned to stay at Halloran for two years and then strike out on our own," said Vukelic.

"They want me to go to Kingsbridge, but it isn't good enough. We need plenty of space.

"We don't want to be hospitalized forever. We just want to get patched up and make our own way.

"I don't think we are asking too much. But I do think the Veterans Administration should keep its word to provide us with treatment near our homes and not in remote places."