

## Seek to Delay Transfer of Paraplegics

By DON SHEARD

The 71 paralyzed veterans of Halloran Hospital who face eviction to inadequate institutions today were assured by a congressman and two state legislators that a 90-day delay in their transfer would be demanded immediately. Meanwhile, new quarters are being established in New York.

"I'll do everything in my power to correct this shocking wrongdoing," said Rep. Victor L. Anfuso, (D) of Brooklyn who left today for Washington, where he will institute a Congressional probe of the Veterans Administration order to disperse the paraplegics to three understaffed and overcrowded hospitals.

Anfuso, State Sen. Harry Gittleston, (D) and Assemblyman Joseph Corso, (D) both of Brooklyn, made a two-hour tour of the paraplegic wards of Halloran on Staten Island yesterday where the paraplegics, for the first time, told their stories to officials.

Aghast at the abrupt treatment of the men, whose war-shattered spines doom them to a life in wheelchairs, Gittleston and Corso will initiate a separate probe in Albany today that also calls for a 90-day deferment of the transfer until an entire floor of the partly occupied Ft. Hamilton VA Hospital in Brooklyn can be converted to the needs of the men.

### STATE HAS OBLIGATION.

"I cannot and will not stand idly by and see these men used as pawns," said Gittleston. "New York State has an obligation to care for them. I'm going to investigate the entire setup and demand to know why the men cannot stay at Halloran until they can be reestablished together."

He will be joined by Assembly-

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man Corso in confronting Gov. Dewey with a demand that the ouster of the men, all ready under way and scheduled to be completed by Feb. 15, be summarily stopped.

The pitiful victims of shrapnel and bullets crowded in wheelchairs around the three legislators. They told, in distressing detail, the hardships that their removal to the crowded and remote Kingsbridge VA Hospital, Bronx, and hospitals in Massachusetts and Virginia would cause.

### VET SUMS UP.

Martin Siltzky, 30, a former infantryman whose battle injuries in Germany have paralyzed him from the waist down, summed up the sentiments of the men.

"We feel alive here. We can breathe and move. Kingsbridge is no good for us. Our cars are our legs. We can't park at Kingsbridge. There is no gym there, and one bathroom for every 20 men."

Anfuso, who journeyed especially from Washington to get a first hand account from the men, assured them that the other congressmen from New York City were solidly behind their fight to be kept together.

"You men were given a definite promise that you would be kept here until Dec. 31, 1952, when the Government is supposed to open the new Manhattan Veterans Hospital," he said.

"They are not living up to their promises. I intend to see that they do," he said.

### GLOOM LIFTED.

For the first time in three weeks, when the bombshell news that they would be dispossessed hit them, the aura of gloom that pervaded the two wards at Halloran, was lifted.

Several men hurriedly wheeled to the bedsides of the dozen completely immobilized paraplegics to tell them that victory was in sight.

"There is no doubt in my mind that everything should be done to keep you men together. The assertion of the Veterans Administration that equipping Ft. Hamilton would be very expensive, is ridiculous," Anfuso said.

"Your sacrifices can't be measured in terms of money. I intend to press the V. A. for an answer. If Ft. Hamilton is the answer it should and will be yours," he added.

As Rep. Anfuso stated his determination in angry tones, more men volunteered their stories of the hardships they will face. Walter Kukelic, an ex-Air Force navigator and Charles Cahill, an ex-sergeant, told the committee how they had spent \$1,000 on an apartment at nearby Crimes Hill.

Touring the wards with the three legislators were Joseph Governale, a tax consultant and Michael Bodamo, an attorney, both of 178 Central ave., Brooklyn, who head the Independent Citizens Committee for Paraplegics Rights.

The veterans were introduced to the legislators by Robert Moss, executive secretary of the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, 99 Park ave., who launched the fight that until last week fell on deaf administration ears.

Gittleston and Corso will ask the State Commissioner of Mental Hygiene to re-examine its transfer of the mental cases to see if the status quo paraplegics can't be maintained until Ft. Hamilton can be made ready for them.