

Halloran Hospital Row: Move at Albany To Stay Eviction

A special seven-man committee of New York legislators today initiated action in Albany to win "a stay of eviction" for the paralyzed veterans facing removal from Halloran Hospital.

Three State Senators and four Assemblymen petitioned Commissioner of Mental Hygiene Newton Bigelow to suspend the transfer of mental patients to Halloran until equal facilities for the treatment of the paraplegics can be established elsewhere in the New York City area.

The mental patients are being moved down from Sampson, N. Y., where their quarters were recently requisitioned by the Air Forces. Although the Veterans Administration held a lease on Halloran until Dec. 31, 1952, it agreed to turn back the hospital to the State by Feb. 15.

MOVE DUE IN 2 WEEKS.

Due to be transferred in two weeks to hospitals in three states, the paraplegics are pinning their hopes on the action in Albany and also in Congress, where another group is seeking a 90-day delay in the ouster order.

The committee which appealed to Mental Hygiene Commissioner Bigelow comprises Sen. John Braisted, Assemblymen William Reidy and Edward Curry, all Staten Island Democrats, and Sens. Mario de Optatis and Harry Gittleton and Assemblymen John J. Ryan and Joseph Corso, Brooklyn Democrats.

Gittleton said:

"These paralyzed veterans are being treated shabbily and we told Commissioner Bigelow so."

He expressed great sympathy over their plight and said he would investigate and give us an answer shortly."

The paralyzed veterans include 42 from New York City, whose spines were shattered. The Veterans Administration promised them they could remain at Halloran, with its unparalleled facilities, until a new center is opened for them in Manhattan in Dec. 1952.

The veterans, many of whom had furnished apartments and moved their families to Staten Island, were plunged into gloom by the Veterans Administration transfer order.

By next week, the 42 remaining paraplegics will be transferred to one ward. By Feb. 15, unless the 90-day deferment is granted in order to give them time to make readjustments or find new space, they will be sent to the crowded wards of the Kingsbridge V. A. Hospital in the Bronx.

Equally outraged was Assemblyman Reidy, who with his Staten Island colleagues has been fighting a stubborn battle for a year to compel the State not to drive the veterans, who include hundreds of tubercular patients and general medical cases, from the island.

PART OF COMMUNITY.

"They have grown to be part of the community. To drive them and the hundreds of trained personnel away is an unconscionable hardship," Reidy said.

They proposed that the idle St. John's Guild Hospital at New Dorp, S. I., formerly an Army area hospital, be reopened and the Halloran patients and personnel be transferred there.

In Washington, a group of New York and New Jersey Congressmen, sparked by Rep. Victor L. Anfuso (D.), Brooklyn, pressed the Veterans Administration for a 90-day delay.

Anfuso is lining up support for his proposal that a floor of the new 22 story Ft. Hamilton VA Hospital in Brooklyn be converted to the use of the paraplegics.

A Navy veteran, who saw action with the Seabees in the South Pacific, Arthur Fleischman, 28, has been in six hospitals since he was paralyzed by polio he contracted in the Philippines in June 1945. He expressed the feelings of the other paraplegics toward their removal from Halloran.

"All my friends are here at Halloran and I can get around in my special car. I don't know what I'll do at Kingsbridge because parking facilities are inadequate. The shopkeepers all know me out here. I just blow the horn and they come out and wait on me," he said.

New Hope for Halloran Vets: Survey May Save Paraplegic Ward

By DON SHEARD

A State official today ordered a new survey made of Halloran Hospital which may lead to the retention of one ward for paralyzed veterans who face eviction from the Staten Island institution by Feb. 15.

Dr. Newton Bigelow, State Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, said the survey will determine how much space is needed for the mentally retarded patients who are being moved to Halloran from Sampson, N. Y.

The Air Forces recently requisitioned the Sampson quarters and the Veterans Administration agreed to turn back Halloran Hospital to the State although its lease on the property does not expire until Dec. 31, 1952.

The Commissioner said:

"These paralyzed veterans deserve whatever can be done to make them happy. If anything can be done for them, you can be assured it will be done."

Dr. Bigelow's action follows the intercession of State Sen. Harry Gittleton (D.-Brooklyn), head of a special seven-man legislative committee which is seeking a 90-day delay in the VA order transferring the paraplegics to hospitals far from their homes, families and friends.

The paraplegics, paralyzed from the waist down, numbered 87 two weeks ago, and occupied small wings of Halloran. Transfers to VA hospitals in Framingham, Mass., and Richmond, Va., have reduced the number to 62. By next week only 42, all New York City residents, will be consolidated in one wing.

VA VIOLATES PROMISE.

The Veterans Administration, intends to move them to crowded Kingsbridge Hospital in the Bronx, despite their pledge to keep them in Halloran until a new Manhattan veterans center is finished in December, 1952.

The legislative committee, whose members include Sens. John Braisted, Mario de Optatis and Assemblymen William Reidy, Edward Curry, John J. Ryan and Joseph Corso, all New York Democrats, protested the "shabby treatment" of the men.

The committee demands a 90-

day delay to give the men time to make adjustments and break up the nearby homes many of them set up on Staten Island for their families.

"This is the first reassuring word we have had and we don't intend to let it rest," said Gittleton. "We will have Dr. Bigelow's answer on Monday and then carry our fight to the Veterans Administration."

REP. ANFUSO AIDS FIGHT.

In Washington, Rep. Anfuso (D.-Brooklyn), carried on his fight for a 90-day extension and his plan to convert one floor of the Ft. Hamilton VA Hospital, Brooklyn, for the use of the paraplegics. "Our moral obligation to the paraplegics exceeds any question of cost or inconvenience to the Veterans Administration," said Anfuso.

The freshman Congressman made a survey of Ft. Hamilton and found one floor could be converted quickly for less than \$10,000. Ample parking facilities, which are necessary for the paraplegics to get in and out of their hand-controlled cars, are available.

One of the greatest objections of the men against the transfer to the Bronx is that they have to park several blocks from Kingsbridge.

Talented James Conroy, 24, who finds solace from his bullet-shattered spine, in sculpting, doesn't want "to be kicked around any more."

"I got mine in the battle of the Rhine River and I've been in Halloran since 1945 after a year in a California hospital.

"I'm going to try to get along on my own rather than go to crowded Kingsbridge."

Suffering from painful bed sores, he requires daily bandaging, but will move to a city housing project in Corona, even though it will be difficult to get treatments.

"What else can you do when the car's right back?" he said.