

some veterans and their families by making the sick travel up to 500 miles. They have noted that, in many areas, the VA facility is not only an economic mainstay for a small community but a prop for high-quality medical service in a whole region. Republican legislators in particular have suggested that President Johnson is contradicting his aims for a great society by undercutting the economy of some small towns and, in the case of the domiciliaries, turning some pathetic old men out on the street to become welfare cases.

The issue has become highly charged emotionally and politically, and the veterans' organizations appear to be doing the work at the local level which is likely to raise the voltage.

The conflict between grassroots sentiment and the advantages of advanced medical technology is really not easy to resolve on a rational, factual basis. A patient needing open-heart surgery or a kidney transplant is clearly going to prefer a modern medical center to a 200-bed hospital at a decommissioned cavalry post on the old frontier. But it can be argued that there are several levels of medicine and that the smaller hospital, even in a remote area, can provide adequate care and perhaps a better morale environment, with family near and enthusiastic volunteer services not found in some big, impersonal hospitals.

Hearings on the dispute are now in progress in the House before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which is chaired by Olin E. Teague (D-Tex.), and in the Senate before the Labor and Public Welfare Committee's subcommittee on veterans' affairs, headed by Senator Ralph W. Yarborough (D-Tex.)

As things stand, there are decided limits on what Congress can do to prevent the closings. The law gives the President, and through him the VA, authority to open and close facilities without specific congressional action.

Congress did tie the VA's hands on the closings until 1 May by attaching a rider to an Agriculture appropriations bill forbidding the agency to use funds to effect the transfers and pay other costs involved in the closings. This, however, is viewed as only a delaying tactic.

To exert greater control, Congress could change the law to require a full authorization and appropriations process for all VA construction and closing plans, as is the case for some other agencies. This would increase the likeli-

hood that the program might in the future again become the kind of political Christmas pie it was between the wars.

While the issue has caused an emotional reaction in Congress, House Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman Teague is not the sort to get very emotional about it. Teague, a World War II veteran with an impressive combat record as an infantryman, and a congressman since 1946, is thoroughly familiar with the VA's ways and objectives and has not in the past bowed to pressure from his colleagues or the veterans' organizations. Teague has said he wants all the evidence to be heard. Hearings in the House will run into April. Much the same thing seems to be happening on the Senate side, and it appears that there will be no congressional action in hot haste. In the last 2 weeks, the issue has been much less frequently mentioned in the pages of the *Congressional Record*, which is a crude barometer of the congressional temper.

Aside from the direct effort to stop the closings, the campaign may have some longer-range objectives.

First, the veterans' organizations and their allies in Congress may hope to deter, by the furor they create, other closings which may be under consideration for the future. Second, there could be a larger objective, a matter which lies near the heart of veterans politics. Veterans' organizations would deplore any fragmentation of the functions of the VA, with which they have a comfortable relationship, or the intrusion of any other federal authority into veterans' affairs. The Bureau of the Budget, which deputized for the White House in the economy drive, has been cast as the villain in the piece. Senator Mansfield and others laid the blame at the door of the Budget Bureau, and, after the initial outburst, criticism of the VA itself was noticeably tempered.

If any overall planning on federal medical services is being done it is being done in the Bureau of the Budget. And the proposed closing, announced on 19 January, of seven Public Health Service hospitals and the transfer of some Merchant Marine patients to veterans' hospitals seem to have alarmed those who suspect the Bureau of the Budget of interest in a kind of consolidation and coordination of federal medical services which would compromise VA autonomy.—JOHN WALSH

Announcements

The American Medical Association's Education and Research Foundation has announced plans to open its **Institute for Biomedical Research** 1 July. The laboratory and animal research facilities will be located in an addition under construction on the AMA building in Chicago. Personnel will be nominated by a committee of scientific advisers headed by Maurice B. Visscher, chairman of the physiology department at the University of Minnesota. Roy E. Ritts, Jr., is the Institute's director.

Meeting Notes

Papers on all areas of **applied mechanics** are being solicited for presentation at the 1965 West Coast conference, sponsored by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The meeting will be held at U.C.L.A. 30 August to 1 September. Deadline for receipt of complete manuscripts: 1 April. (P. M. Naghdi, Division of Applied Mechanics, University of California, Berkeley)

Grants, Fellowships, and Awards

The school of environmental and planetary sciences of the University of Miami is inviting applications for all-expense-paid fellowships for its course in **environmental and planetary sciences**, scheduled 21 June to 30 July. The course will be sponsored by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Emphasis will be on geophysical and fluid dynamics and advanced concepts in electromagnetic sensing. Field trips will include visits to the Kennedy Space Center and to the volcano Irazu, in Costa Rica. The course will carry 6 hours of credit; recipients of the grants must register for credit. Applicants must have completed the equivalent of 3 years' college training in mathematics through advanced calculus, and in physical sciences. Letters of application should include academic transcripts and a description of the applicant's professional goals. Letters of recommendation from three of the applicant's professors are also required. Deadline for receipt of applications: 26 April. (S. F. Singer, School of Environmental and Planetary Sciences, University of Miami, Coral Gables 33124)