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The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the present consideration of the report?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the report.

Mr. PASTORE. Mr. President, if it is agreeable with the Senate, I should like to have a short quorum call. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PASTORE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, before the Senator starts, will he yield me about 2 minutes?

Mr. PASTORE. I yield to the Senator from Montana.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on November 10, 1969, I had a colloquy with the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. PASTORE). The colloquy reads as follows:

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, before the Senator gets into the main part of his speech I wish to ask a question about the Veterans' Administration hospital at Fort Harrison, Mont.

I have been receiving a number of communications from various veterans' organizations and individual veterans in Montana about the fact that the Veterans' Administration at Fort Harrison has closed a 40-unit wing, stating they could give a better service with the remaining facility. That may be true or it may not be true, but the fear on the part of veterans in Montana—and the State covers approximately 148,000 square miles—is that the Veterans' Administration is using this as a first step to close down permanently this 40-unit wing, thereby reducing the capability of Fort Harrison to take care of the needs of veterans in Montana. Can the distinguished chairman of the committee give me some information on this particular situation?

Mr. PASTORE. Yes, I would be delighted to do so.

This is still Mr. PASTORE speaking:

Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Montana raised the same question at the markup in full committee. Pursuant to that statement we had the staff check into it in detail. The staff took the matter up with the proper agency and the proper authorities therein. We have been assured that the particular wing is closed temporarily because of the lack of patients, but it is available and will be available, and it is not to be abandoned.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I could not ask for more of an assurance than that.

An assurance, incidentally, in which I believe the distinguished senior Senator from Colorado, the ranking minority member of the Appropriations Committee (Mr. ALLOTT), concurred.

Mr. ALLOTT. That is correct.

Mr. MANSFIELD. The colloquy continued:

On behalf of the veterans of Montana I wish to thank the chairman of the committee, the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. PASTORE) for his assurance that this 40-unit wing will not be abandoned.

Mr. PASTORE. It was a pleasure to make the inquiry and gain that assurance.

Mr. President, this morning at approximately 10:57 a.m., Dola Wilson called from Helena. He said that he went

INDEPENDENT OFFICES AND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS, 1970—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. PASTORE. Mr. President, as in legislative session, I submit a report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 12307) making appropriations for sundry independent executive bureaus, boards, commissions, corporations, agencies, offices, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1970, and for other purposes. I ask unanimous consent for the present consideration of the report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The report will be read for the information of the Senate.

The legislative clerk read the report. (For conference report, see House proceedings of November 17, 1969, pp. H10965-H10966, CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.)

to Fort Harrison Hospital on Wednesday, November 12, to be admitted and he was told that there was no bed. At that time, he said he had a driver and he asked the people at Fort Harrison if there would be a bed at Miles City, as he would have his driver take him there. He was told by Fort Harrison that there was no bed at Miles City.

He was certified for admission on Monday, November 17, but still has no bed as of this morning. Dola is a 40-percent service-connected veteran. He stated that, while he was not exactly an emergency case, he was quite sick when he went up to Helena last week. He has been staying at his daughter's home in the meantime. Dola was told at Fort Harrison that they would pay for a motel room while he waited for a bed. He refused this.

He stated on the days that he has been up there, he has seen other veterans similarly turned away for lack of a bed. I asked him if he knew who they were and how many. He did not have any names but he said there were approximately 10 that he knows of. He went up to the Veterans of Foreign Wars office and saw Robert Durkee, and he was told by Bob that Bob knew personally one Vietnam veteran who was not admitted because of the lack of a bed. I asked Dola to call Bob Durkee and ask him to send in to us the names of any veterans he knows who have not been admitted to Fort Harrison Hospital because of the lack of bed space. He said he would do this.

I called the Veterans Liaison office and told them of this situation, and I have received a call back from the Veterans' Administration office. They are checking into this situation immediately, particularly in view of the information contained in the letter of November 14 which we just received, which I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD at this point, together with other letters having to do with the situation which seems to be developing at Fort Harrison.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, D.C., November 14, 1969.

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR MANSFIELD: Thank you for transmitting the inquiry from Mr. John G. Gregory, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, at Whitehall, Montana, pertaining to the Veterans' Administration Center, Fort Harrison, Montana.

We assure you that no veteran has been discharged prematurely or rejected for lack of available space. Also, no veteran has been forced to go to the Miles City Hospital. Some applicants for admission have been referred, with their consent, to our Miles City Hospital when geographical considerations make such referrals advisable. That Hospital has vacant beds and no waiting list.

Since closing the ward, there has been a sufficient number of vacant beds on the remaining wards to accommodate the admission of all eligible veterans. There is no waiting list. The action was effected to improve staffing and care of patients by the concentration of professional and other service per-

sonnel on the remaining three wards. The nursing staff available to patients has been significantly augmented by this means. These beds are available for reactivation; however, the demand at present does not exist. This was confirmed by recent contacts with the Center Director who indicated he had vacant beds on the three remaining wards.

We shall continue to meet the demand for medical care at the Fort Harrison Hospital and provide effective service to all eligible veterans.

Sincerely,

DONALD E. JOHNSON,
Administrator.

HELENA, MONT.

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MIKE: I hate to take all these complaints to you about the Hospital at Fort Harrison, but reading the information you put in the local paper, I would like very much to tell the man he is a you know what.

I will admit that in order for them not to have a waiting list there they very conveniently take care of that by putting every one they don't want to let in the hospital on what they call post Hospital Care that way they do not keep a waiting list.

Now this place and the man that give you that false information I feel that if given a chance to talk to all the people they turn away I could prove them liars.

They tell us the only reason the hospital wing is closed because Congress did not appropriate enough money to operate it.

Some one is pulling someone's leg. Before election comes up again I would like to know who.

R. L. Mock.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, D.C., October 7, 1969.

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR MANSFIELD: Thank you for your inquiry in behalf of Mr. Lyle Jacobson who wrote you concerning the Veterans Administration Center, Fort Harrison, Montana.

We have recently taken out of operation one hospital ward of 40 beds. This action was effected to improve staffing and care of patients by the concentration of professional and other service personnel of the remaining three wards. The nursing staff available to patients has been significantly augmented by this means.

Since closing the ward, there has been a sufficient number of vacant beds on the remaining wards to admit veterans who, in the judgment of the professional staff, are in need of hospital treatment. You will be glad to learn that there is no waiting list. Some applicants for admission are being referred with their consent to our Miles City hospital, when geographical considerations make such referrals advisable. The percentage of applicants being admitted to Fort Harrison is comparable to that of other general medical and surgical hospital of the Veterans Administration.

We are confident that the hospitalized veterans will continue to be well served at Fort Harrison. There are no plans for closing either of the VA hospitals in Montana.

I appreciate your interest in the medical program of the Veterans Administration.

Sincerely,

DONALD E. JOHNSON,
Administrator.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I would express the hope that the Veterans' Administration is not again, for a second time in 6 years, trying an end-run around the Senator from the State of Montana. We

had an awfully hard time keeping the VA hospital at Miles City. We had an awfully hard time getting the necessary beds and the enlargement at Fort Harrison, and had looked to this committee, on the basis of its assurances both in the committee and on the floor, to watch this matter carefully and see that what the committee said will be done and that this 40-unit wing will not be disbanded or done away with, but will be kept and that the veterans of Montana will be given every possible facility to take care of the needs which developed as a result of their service to their country. And what I have to say for Montana I intend to say for all other veterans of all States of the Union.

Mr. PASTORE. Mr. President, how long has he had the correspondence?

Mr. MANSFIELD. Since the Senate passed the appropriation bill being considered now in the conference report, a week ago Monday.

Mr. PASTORE. I can understand the indignation of the majority leader predicated on the fact that we gave him the report based on the investigation made by our staff. Had the majority leader given me the letter sooner, I would have had satisfaction for him today. If he will give me the letter now, I will get him satisfaction within 24 hours.

Mr. MANSFIELD. What I have read is information I have received as a result of a telephone call from Dola Wilson, from Helena this morning. But this is a letter dated the 14th, which was after the bill was acted on.

I hope that both will appear in the RECORD.

Mr. PASTORE. Mr. President, I will be in touch with the Senator within 24 hours.

Mr. ALLOTT. Mr. President, I state to the distinguished Senator from Montana that I previously indicated to him that I am in complete sympathy with the position he has taken.

I joined with him and with many other Senators in the fight we had 6 years ago to preserve some of our veterans hospitals. My feelings are wholly akin to his. I think we should see that our veterans are taken care of.

I join with the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee in this matter.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Colorado.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the conference report.

The report was agreed to.