

MAN'S INHUMANITY.

Hidden away in filthy, rat-infested dungeons. Abandoned in "warehouses for the dying." Clad in rags, forced to huddle half-frozen in their own dirt. Fed slop not fit for animals. Subject to constant physical and mental abuses. Denied medication and the last shreds of human dignity by callous, incompetent caretakers.

Since Sunday the pages of THE TRIBUNE have been filled with this picture of life for the elderly poor who are dumped by the thousands into Chicago and suburban nursing homes. A task force of four reporters, aided by investigators of the Chicago Better Government Association, documented this scene by living and working in the worst of the nursing homes for six weeks.

Not all nursing homes fit this scene that could have been etched by a Hogarth in London's worst slums. Far from it. Our task force team worked in some homes where the atmosphere equaled that of a superior hospital. But what they did find were many nursing homes best described as "warehouses for the dying," run by administrators with no regard for fellow human beings, only for the inmate's welfare or social security check.

The story, as the investigation unfolded, was an all too familiar one to Chicago. The squalor of the nursing homes could only exist thru failure of public officials to enforce the law.

Homes were seldom inspected. When they were, employes boasted how easily they could bribe inspectors or hoodwink those few who were not "on the take." On the rare occasions when a flagrant malefactor was haled into court (accompanied by his lawyer, a state politician) for a minor violation he was slapped on the wrist with a paltry fine.

Other public officials professed to be frustrated by this procedure. Russell Bryani, administrator of the long-term care department of the Illinois Department of Public Health, said both the Illinois department and the Chicago Board of Health have tried to put the worst offenders out of business, but without success.

That was the same argument raised nine years ago when THE TRIBUNE exposed another scandal about living conditions in 17 nursing homes owned and operated by Dr. Leonard Tilkin, a Skokie psychiatrist. His \$24,000 a year executive vice president was Joseph Bonnan, who had previously resigned as administrative aid to Mayor Daley, in which position he wrote the city ordinance governing nursing homes.

Tilkin, as THE TRIBUNE expose disclosed, had been getting \$1 million a year from the state public welfare funds to house more than 600 of the elderly indigent in his "warehouses for the dying."

The expose resulted in the county removing all of its welfare patients from the chain of Tilkin homes, one of the worst of which was the Monterey-Drexel on the South Side. Our team of reporters found that nine years after that sorry event the nursing home is still in business, still filled with welfare clients and others of the elderly poor, still so filthy that employes joke about the multi-colored cockroaches that swarm thru the kitchen and dining areas.

Tilkin is now gone from the scene—he filed as a bankrupt in 1963. But his right hand man, Bonnan, is still on the job. The Monterey-Drexel is one of the several former Tilkin homes that Bonnan took into his new management corporation.

City codes are adopted to ensure that nursing homes are clean, decent places for the elderly to spend their last years. State laws are passed to make doubly sure. But, in the end, nothing seems to change. Even the faces stay the same when another expose stirs up City Hall for a few moments.