



(UPI Telephoto for Chicago Tribune)

William Jones, Tribune reporter, testifies on condition of Chicago area nursing homes before Legislative Advisory Committee on Public Assistance.

3 Call for Tightening of Nursing Home Laws

BY JOHN ELMER

(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., March 8—Laws should be enacted to require immediate closing of nursing homes which do not meet state standards, and licensing of aides who work in such establishments should also be required, witnesses told the Illinois Public Aid Advisory Commission today.

The witnesses were George Bliss, acting director of the Better Government Association; William Recktenwald, a B. G. A. investigator; and William Jones, reporter who headed a CHICAGO TRIBUNE task force which exposed many Chicago area nursing homes as "warehouses for the dying." They urged reform legislation after telling commission members of deplorable conditions they found in many nursing homes during a six-week probe.

Need for Training

Noting that TRIBUNE reporters and B. G. A. investigators had been immediately hired as nurses aides and in one case as a nursing home director, Jones recommended that training and licensing be required for those who care for the elderly.

"Anyone who will work for \$1.75 an hour is hired off the streets in many cases," Jones said.

He also urged legislation to permit the immediate closing of nursing homes if an inspection showed that they failed to meet requirements.

Tell of Experiences

At present, even if a nursing home's license is suspended, it can obtain a court injunction and stay in business for months, he said.

Bliss and Recktenwald urged similar legislation to help halt abuses they found while investigating Chicago area nursing homes.

All three witnesses told of finding filthy living conditions and many instances of patient neglect and brutality by aides when they posed as employees of 20 nursing homes in Chicago and suburbs.

Bliss told the commission that conditions at some nursing homes were so bad that "experienced investigators, with backgrounds of years of digging into scores of sordid situations, were appalled and sickened by what they witnessed."

He said the B. G. A. is particularly eager to discover "why so many of the nursing homes were able to continue to operate much as did the notorious concentration camps of World War II, altho there are adequate laws, regulations and controls covering nursing homes."

Sen. John W. Carroll [R., Park Ridge], commission chairman, said \$68 million in welfare funds was paid to nursing homes last year. About

17,000 welfare recipients are now residing in nursing homes in Illinois.

Another commission member, Sen. Ester Saperstein [D., Chicago], asserted that a program under which mentally ill persons are placed in nursing homes after partial recovery from their illness has been moving too fast.

There has been no followup on that program, and the influx of mentally ill into nursing homes may have been a complicating factor, she said.

Investigation Vowed

After the meeting, Carroll said his commission would investigate Chicago area nursing homes thoroly and recommend legislation to correct conditions described by the witnesses.

Carroll said the commission will ask for detailed information from TRIBUNE and B. G. A. personnel about each nursing home they visited so that each case of abuse can be documented.

The commission also will get testimony from nursing home operators and owners, using its subpoena powers if necessary, he said.