LAST WORD

And these, too, like the words of General Haig, prophetic.

Twenty-four months have passed since the centennial conference of the NGAS and now the Association, under its new slate of officers, is well away into the second century. We have enjoyed being part of the transition into the new era, which also coincides with the beginning of a new decade. But if we seem to be thinking in terms of change and transition, we must also point out the great sense of continuity which characterizes our Association. This continuity, this unbroken chain which links us with our past and with our destiny, is ample evidence of the stability which is inherent in the National Guard system.

Some years back, a Chief of the National Guard Bureau described the Guard as "the system that works". We think these words say a lot. We believe that the National Guard is... the system that works. It works because it can count upon the people who must labor in the vineyards to make it work. We find it is little short of amazing how each generation and each decade produces new leadership to pick up where the old leadership left off. There are no gaps, no missing links.

Each NAIGUS administration is strengthened by the system which spawns leaders when an officer is elected, works his way "up the chairs" and eventually passes into the role of a working "elder statesman".

Our purpose, at this time, is to comment on several aspects of the National Guard system which I have been privileged to get to know better in my two-year stint as your president. These are the things I should like to comment upon in this final essay before turning over this space to my successor.

The strength of the National Guard, now as always in the past, lies in its relationship with the states. In our visits to the states, this long-standing belief has been confirmed. Every state has its differences, every state has some distinguishing mark and each has its own singular pride.

Getting to know the state associations has been a privilege. Through these visits we have gained many a fine forum which has enabled us to talk to men and women of the Guard. We would be remiss if we did not salute the efforts and the accomplishments of the state associations.

We set out, in 1978, to pick up the initiative already underway to focus attention on the role of the retired "community" within the Guard Association family—and we hoped to increase the involvement of the company grade officer. It has been a source of great personal and professional satisfaction to see how both groups have responded.

Under Major General Robert G. Moorhead of Indiana, the Graduates and Alumni of the National Guard ("GANG") have taken form to increase the participation of retired and separated officers no longer active in the Guard but anxious to be active in the Association. Under the leadership of Captain Robert B. James, Jr., of Ohio, the company grade "coulsus" has started to produce ample evidence that we need have no fear that the so-called "next generation" will not be prepared and equipped to assume leadership roles in the affairs of the Association. All of us in the Guard Association owe a debt of gratitude to these two officers for their fine work.

This column is not intended to be a substitute for the annual report of the president, which will be published in the December issue of National Guard Magazine. But it is a uniquely appropriate place to mention—in a sense as the last word—of the major area of emphasis (continued on page 30)