

REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED

APRIL 30, 1965

H
H. Mayo

Four years ago, Emik Avakian won the
President's Trophy as Handicapped Man of the Year.

Mr. Avakian is severely cerebral palsied, almost
unable to sit in a wheelchair.

L Years ago, he had to fight his way into
college against the advice of counselors who
thought he was too severely handicapped. Now an
electrical engineer, he is also a brilliant scientist.

He devised a lightning-fast reservation system
whereby airlines can tell how many seats are available
on all flights.

↳ He couldn't hold a pencil, so he invented a typewriter that could be operated with his breath. He is at present working on use of a computer to control radiation beams that might perform bloodless surgery on that part of the brain which, if injured, can cause cerebral palsy.

↳ This disabled American acts to overcome not only his own disability but to make possible new vistas for the able as well as for the disabled. Others are joined in this struggle.

↳ This Administration is committed to it. And so are you.

This February, President Johnson wrote to the nation's employers"

"Given encouragement and hope,
our handicapped citizens can competitively
earn a useful place in our great land of
opportunity. They have the courage.
All they need is a chance to prove themselves."

< It is you who are providing that chance --
you of governors' committees and mayors'
committees, you who are leaders of business, of
labor, civic groups, veterans, and other
voluntary organizations.

↳ Your teamwork with the President's Committees,
the U.S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration,
and state rehabilitation agencies has opened
employment doors which for too long were barred
to the handicapped. ↳ You opened those closed doors
by first opening closed minds. Those minds had
arbitrarily rejected the disabled as being
allegedly "unemployable." ↳ But open minds ...
open hearts ... friendly outstretched hands
have changed that picture. -

↳ Thus, as an example, last year, 8,300 men and
women who had been regarded as completely outside
the labor force -- because they were mentally retarded--
were put to gainful work. ↳ They represent only a

small proportion of the 3 million retarded who are capable of doing a job. But this important beginning does show what can be done.

∟ I honor those -- in the National Association for Retarded Children -- and in cooperating organizations who blazed this path of progress.

∟ This October will mark the 20th Anniversary of the first celebration of a special week to employ the handicapped.

∟ Eighteen years ago it was my privilege, as Mayor of Minneapolis, to issue one of the first municipal proclamations for observance of that week.

∟ At that time, the secretary of our Mayor's Committee was a young Purple Heart veteran named Orville Freeman. Today, as Secretary of Agriculture, he is leading the fight to aid America's rural disabled.

↳ In this auditorium today are many pioneers
of jobs-for-the-handicapped. You have proven
that it is definitely good business to employ the
handicapped.

↳ And it is good government and good citizenship
to get a disabled man off the welfare roll onto a
payroll and a tax roll. *Full citizenship!*

↳ For years, the roll call of honor for the
handicapped was headed by the predecessor of your
great Harold Russell -- a fellow Minnesotan, the late
General Melvin Maas. (Though blind, General Maas

"saw" this need of the Nation and responded
magnificently to it. *He opened our eyes!*

↳ He led us closer to the time when all men and
women in our society will have full opportunity to develop
their talents and skills.

↳ The goal of this Administration is -- as
it was General Maas' goal -- "opportunity for all
Americans. We seek opportunity for all who would
work to lift themselves.

↳ The handicapped do want to work. The handicapped
↳ do not want pity. They do not want handouts. And
they do not want "made-work." ↳ They ask only that
they be trained for meaningful jobs they can perform
and that, whenever necessary, jobs be adapted so they
can perform them.

↳ That is not too much to ask. ↳ we can do it.

↳ But the job-seeking handicapped comprise a long
waiting list. Three million Americans have disabilities
which still keep them on the fringes of community
and family life.

Year by year, the numbers of the rehabilitated are -- fortunately -- rising. In five years, we hope to reach the annual mark of rehabilitating 200,000 each year. - Good news.

But the time gap implicit in these figures confirms how far we still have to go.

Meanwhile, time hangs heavy on those waiting their chance for a job. Is there anyone among us who can calculate the anguish of the man or woman forced to wait or who vainly apply for employment -- time after time -- only to be rejected?

For these men and women we are determined to open up more jobs. Jobs are needed, too, not just for the disabled -- but for millions of the impoverished.

↳ The poor and the disabled are frequently
one and the same.

↳ Some 40 percent of the disabled are poor.

↳ It is no coincidence, too, that the poor are
blighted far more frequently by mental retardation
and mental illness than are more fortunate citizens.

↳ One handicap tends to breed others. A vicious
cycle goes on and on. Starting with disability or
with poverty, it leads to other forms of deprivation
-- to psychological, cultural, social or other wants.

↳ To remedy this tragic pattern -- to provide for
the deprived, to uplift the poor, the disabled -- a
peaceful war is being fought in this nation.

↳ The war against poverty is simultaneously a
war against disability -- to prevent disability before

it strikes ... to treat disability if it does

strike ... to cure disabilty, if possible ...

or to relieve it and to rehabilitate the victim.

↳ Against single or multiple handicaps, your
Government
Administration is mobilizing every sound weapon

that the ingenuity of man's mind and the devotion

of man's heart can devise.

↳ History-making legislation -- federal aid to
primary and secondary education, including special

education ... aid to evaluate the potential of

the disabled and to expand sheltered workshops ...

aid for regional medical centers -- is being passed.

↳ It is being passed because of the broad support of
American citizens -- especially the citizens in

this audience.

↳ I urge you in this audience not just to
receive -- passively -- the qualified handicapped
who are sent to you, and not just to hire them.

↳ I urge you to go out and see the handicapped --
where they live, where they train. See them in
sheltered workshops. ↳ See them, too, in companies
which are successfully employing them. Listen to
them. *Encourage them.*

↳ Then participate in the new program of
employment seminars which mayors throughout American
are now organizing.

↳ Examine the program of jobs-for-the-handicapped
in your own state and community. Meet the targets
you have set for job placements and then go on to
achieve still higher targets.

L What you are doing is not only economically
right but morally right.

~~---~~ ~~---~~ ~~---~~
L In the future, despite our progress, we face
formidable problems.

L Most of our efforts must now be directed against
fortresses which thus far have resisted progress. I
refer to such citadels as mental illness, mental
retardation and epilepsy.

~~---~~ ~~---~~
L Recent history proves that the walls of an
enemy fortress -- like poliomyelitis or tuberculosis --
"will come tumbling down" if public and private
forces combine to concentrate national attention
upon it.

L Long since, American genius broke the sound
barrier. Now, let us break the prejudice barrier --
the racial barrier

the poverty barrier -- the disability barrier --

the psychological barrier which denies any man his
due.

Jobs for disabled Americans are a blessing
for every American. Let us multiply that blessing.

- - - - -

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

A D D R E S S

O F

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED

ANNUAL MEETING

WASHINGTON, D.C.

APRIL 30, 1965

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Dr. Mayo, Mr. Russell, and my friend Mr. Rosenberg, and ladies and gentlemen representing the fifty Governors' committees, the mayors of our great cities, representatives of business and labor, volunteer groups, and veterans' groups, I am extremely honored and most gratified to be given the opportunity to participate in your conference.

I have just had the privilege of meeting some of your distinguished leaders and also of visiting informally with those who have carried on this worthy endeavor so valiantly, with the gentlemen that will represent the crusade for the rehabilitation and employment of the handicapped, The Handicapped Man of the Year 1965, and, also, of course, those who have undertaken this high responsibility in other years.

May I digress for just a moment to say to Mr. Russell, Harold Russell, who is an old friend of mine -- we have worked together for many years -- how much I admire and respect this

1 splendid publication that will be sent out to employers, to
2 citizens over America, a little brochure, pamphlet of The
3 President's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped,
4 the subcommittee of this Committee, showing what can be done
5 and what has been done in terms of the conservation and the use
6 and development of human resources.

7 I must say that if I were to name this conference,
8 I would just call it the Human Resources Conference, because
9 what a pity it is when that which God created is not given the
10 opportunity for its fulfillment, and human resources are, of
11 course, our valuable resources, and these resources we have
12 sometimes taken for granted or too often abused or exploited
13 and all too seldom fully appreciated.

14 In this day and age, however, there is a re-awakening,
15 and we are beginning to understand the wealth of our nation in
16 its people, the strength of our nation in its own, the future
17 of our nation in the faith and hope of the people, and that it
18 is people, people, that are at the very center of the democratic
19 commitment.

20 Four years ago, Emik Avakian -- I hope I pronounced
21 the name correctly -- won the President's trophy as the
22 Handicapped Man of the Year, and this gallant man was severely
23 cerebral palsied, almost unable to sit in a wheelchair. Years
24 ago he had to fight his way into college against the advice of
25 counsellors who thought he was too severely handicapped. Now,

1 an electrical engineer, he is also a brilliant scientist, and
2 this man who had the courage of a giant and the determination
3 of a soldier devised a lightning fast reservation system whereby
4 the airlines can tell how many seats are available almost
5 instantaneously on all flights. It is true he could not hold
6 a pencil because of his affliction, but that did not stop him;
7 so, he invented a typewriter that could be operated with his
8 breath. Imagine the ingenuity of this man, and he is at present
9 working on the use of a computer to control radiation beams that
10 perform bloodless surgery on that part of the brain which, if
11 injured, can cause cerebral palsy.

12 There is an example of what I mean by human resources,
13 salvaged, rehabilitated, conserved, developed and put to use.

14 Now, that disabled fellow American acted to overcome
15 not only his own disabilities but to make possible new vistas
16 for the able as well as the disabled.

17 I fully recognize this is a dramatic example, but
18 there is great drama in all we do these days. This dramatic
19 example does not stand alone, others are joined in this
20 struggle, and I am happy to say, as a representative of your
21 Government, this Administration is committed to this struggle
22 and the rehabilitation of the handicapped for the development
23 and conservation and wise use of our human resources.

24 (Applause.)

25 THE VICE PRESIDENT: But even more significantly, you

1 are committed, and that is what is really the margin of victory.

2 Now, this February past, President Johnson wrote to
3 the nation's employers these words:

4 "Given encouragement and hope, our handicapped
5 citizens can competitively earn a useful place in our
6 great land of opportunity. They have the courage.
7 All they need is a chance to prove themselves.

8 Now, it is you who are providing that chance, you,
9 right here in this auditorium and hundreds and thousands like
10 you that you represent. You, of the Governors' committees and
11 employers' committees. You, who are leaders of business,
12 labor, civil groups, veterans and other voluntary organizations
13 -- I just love that phrase "voluntary organizations", because,
14 my fellow Americans, this is so characteristic of our country.
15 This is the difference in many ways between what we are and
16 what others are. We rely upon voluntarism. We rely upon the
17 spontaneous willingness and commitment of our fellow Americans.

18 Your key work with The President's Committee, your
19 work in the U. S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration
20 and the State rehabilitation agencies has opened employment doors
21 which for too long have been barred, completely shut to the hand-
22 icapped. You opened those closed doors, but you did it by first
23 opening the closed minds, and those minds had arbitrarily reject-
24 ed the disabled as being allegedly unemployable. But we found
25 out open minds, open hearts, friendly, outstretched hands have

1 changed that picture, and these closed doors are wide open today,
2 my friends, because you have made it so.

3 Thus, as an example, last year, 8,300 men and women
4 who had before been regarded as completely outside the labor
5 force -- I suppose hopelessly handicapped, some might have
6 said -- because they were mentally retarded, they were put
7 through rehabilitation and training for gainful work, and they
8 become self-sustaining citizens, contributing to the wealth
9 and the power and the might of this great nation.

10 They represent only a small proportion of the 3,000,000
11 retarded, who are capable of doing a job and want to do a job,
12 but this important beginning today shows what can be done, and
13 I am always reminded, when I use that word "beginning", that the
14 longest journey is the first step, and once you have made that
15 break-through, that first step, then the journey becomes only a
16 matter of time and the energy we are willing to commit to it.

17 I honor those today in the national organization for
18 retarded children and in the cooperating organizations who blazed
19 this path of progress. My friends, Mr. Rosenberg, who is here
20 today, has been in the lead of that fight, and I honor him for
21 it.

22 This October will mark the 20th anniversary of the
23 first celebration of this special week to employ the handicapped.
24 We Americans do have a number of special weeks, but I hope that
25 we will remember that a week is but the catalyst that should pro-

1 pel us throughout the whole year.

2 Eighteen years ago, it was my privilege as the Mayor
3 of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota, to issue one of the first
4 municipal proclamations for the observance of "Employ the Handi-
5 capped Week", and at that time the secretary of the Mayors'
6 Committee to Employ the Handicapped was a young purple-heart
7 veteran named Orville Freeman, and today that young purple-
8 heart veteran that was the first secretary of that Committee
9 is the Secretary of Agriculture in the President's Cabinet here
10 in Washington, D. C.

11 (Applause.)

12 THE VICE PRESIDENT: That young secretary then, and
13 we would like to have me say he is still young, that young
14 secretary is today leading the fight to aid America's rural
15 disabled. He never quit. By the way, he was rather disabled
16 himself, but he overcame that just as Harold Russell and
17 thousands and thousands more like them have overcome what some
18 people thought was their disability.

19 In this auditorium today are many pioneers of the
20 jobs for the handicapped. You fought the good fight, and you
21 ought to have medals all down your lapels, all telling of
22 your victories. You have proven that it is definitely good
23 business to employ the handicapped, and you have proven that
24 it can be done.

25 I might add, it's not only good business but it's

1 good Government and it's good citizenship to get a disabled
2 man back on his own feet doing the job that he can do, to help
3 someone that is disabled to get off the welfare rolls and onto
4 the payrolls; and, of course, that also means you also get him
5 on the tax rolls.

6 The President has said on occasion that we need to do
7 everything that we possibly can to see to it that people are
8 not tax eaters but tax payers. This is another to say, become
9 productive so you can share of your talents with this whole
10 country.

11 For years, the role of honor for the handicapped was
12 headed by the predecessor of our own good friend here today,
13 and your great Harold Russell, who was a fellow Minnesotan, the
14 late General Melvin Maas. What a remarkable man. Though he
15 was blind, General Maas saw the need of this nation, and he
16 responded magnificiently to it. Isn't it interesting how
17 one could be blind in the physical sense and yet see so much
18 and see the needs of people? Blind, his eyes closed, but he
19 opened ours, and we are eternally in his debt.

20 He led us closer to the time when all men and women
21 in our society will have full opportunity to develop their
22 talents and skills, and the goal of this Administration is,
23 as was General Maas's goal, opportunity. Opportunity for all
24 Americans; opportunities for the well, the strong, or the disabled
25 of the weak, the white, the colored -- opportunity for any per-

1 son that lives within the jurisdiction of the sovereign power
2 of the United States of America.

3 (Applause.)

4 THE VICE PRESIDENT: And we are determined to achieve
5 that opportunity and to seek it for all who would work to lift
6 themselves.

7 Now, the handicapped do want to work. The handicapped,
8 as you well know, do not want pity. They do not even want hand-
9 outs, and they do not want some so-called made work; they ask
10 only that they be trained for meaningful jobs they can perform
11 and that, whenever it is necessary, the jobs be adapted so that
12 they can perform them.

13 Now, that isn't too much to ask, and you and I know
14 we can do it, but the job-seeking handicapped compromise a long
15 waiting list. Three million Americans have disabilities which
16 still keep them on the fringes of the community and family life,
17 and year by year the numbers of the rehabilitated are fortunately
18 rising.

19 Rehabilitation has become a great cause in our country.
20 In five years, we hope to reach the annual mark of rehabilitating
21 300,000 of our fellow citizens each year.

22 Now, that is good news, but there are 3,000,000 dis-
23 abled. The time gap implicit in these figures confirms, however,
24 we still have to go a long way, and that is why we need meetings
25 like this to move the work along, to be in a hurry and to recog-

1 nize the sense of urgency. Meanwhile, time hangs heavy on those
2 awaiting their chance for a job. Is there any among us who
3 can calculate the anguish and pain of a man or woman forced
4 to wait and vainly apply for employment time after time only
5 to be rejected? For these men and women, we are determined to
6 open up more jobs. Jobs are needed, too, not just for the dis-
7 abled but for millions of the impoverished.

8 I have worked this morning, my fellow citizens, for
9 better than two hours with a Cabinet committee and leaders of
10 our Government on this program of employment in America. We
11 are bending every effort, we are making every effort we know
12 how to make, going through every department of Government
13 and meeting with employers in every human endeavor, meeting
14 with people all over America to say to them, frankly: "Provide
15 jobs"; and saying to those who want the jobs: "Train yourselves."

16 The training facilities are here. Saying to the
17 schools and technical institutions, saying to the doctors and
18 rehabilitation specialists: "Let's work together with employers,
19 with labor, with our facilities, to see to it that jobs are
20 available and that those jobs, when available, can be filled
21 with qualified people."

22 The poor and the disabled that I have mentioned are
23 frequently one and the same. Some 40 per cent of our disabled
24 are tragically poor. It is not coincidence, too, that the poor
25 are blighted far more frequently by mental retardation and

1 mental illness than are the more fortunate citizens.

2 I read some interesting facts of late. We now know,
3 dear friends, that families that are on relief over a consid-
4 erable period of time seem to establish a pattern that falls
5 into the next generation. We now know that poverty is almost
6 contagious. We now know the poor beget the poor, and this
7 is one of the reasons we are beginning to strike body blows
8 at the root causes of the poverty. We have to root it out.
9 We can't just treat it on the surface. We have to get at
10 its causes, and we have to have the same kind of adventuresome
11 spirit and willingness to do the impossible as we have to
12 have in these space programs or other programs.

13 This country can do anything it wants to do. All we
14 have to do is make up our minds that we can do it. Any country
15 that can put a man on the moon ought to be able to put a man on
16 his feet on the earth.

17 (Applause.)

18 THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, we know one handicap tends
19 to breed others, and a vicious circle goes on and on, and start-
20 ing with disability or poverty, it leads to other forms of
21 deprivation -- the psychological, cultural, social and other
22 wants.

23 To remedy this tragic pattern and provide for the
24 deprived, to help uplift the poor and disabled, a peaceful war
25 is being fought in this nation, the war against poverty is simul-

1 taneously a war against disability, to prevent disability before
2 it strikes, to treat disability if it does strike, to cure
3 disability if possible, or to relieve it and to rehabilitate
4 the victims against single or multiple handicaps, and your
5 Government -- and it is our Government -- I love to say it --
6 of the people, by the people, and for the people -- is mobilizing
7 every sound weapon that the ingenuity of a man's mind and the
8 devotion of a man's heart can devise.

9 History-making legislation, Federal aid to primary and
10 secondary education, including special education in the largest,
11 more comprehensive programs that this nation has ever known --
12 aid to evaluate the potential of the disabled and to expand
13 sheltered workshops, aid for regional medical centers, which
14 is before the Congress and is being passed, being passed because
15 of the broad support of the American citizens, especially the
16 citizens in this audience.

17 Congress is responding to the needs and to the wishes
18 of the American people, and that is the way it ought to be in
19 a representative democracy.

20 I urge you, therefore, in this audience, not just to
21 receive passively the qualified handicapped who are sent to you
22 -- not just to hire them, I urge you to go out and see the
23 handicapped, to see where they live, how they live and where they
24 train; see them in the sheltered workshops, see them in companies,
25 businesses, which are successfully employing them; listen to

1 them, and, then, encourage them and encourage others.

2 Then, my friends, participate in the new programs of
3 employment, seminars which mayors and governors throughout America
4 are now organizing; examine the programs of the jobs for the
5 handicapped in your own state and community; lift your sights.

6 If you came down here only to review what you thought
7 was going to happen, this trip wasn't really necessary. The
8 purpose of a meeting like this is to resolve to do better than
9 you ever thought you could do, to set a new standard. That is
10 why we get together, to evaluate what has been done, to see how
11 we can adapt it to our community, and, then, one by one, to
12 pledge either publicly or privately that you are going to do
13 a whole lot more than you ever dreamed possible to double and re-
14 double our commitments and our promised goals.

15 Yes, I want you to examine your programs for jobs for
16 the handicapped, take a look at your community services that
17 equip these people for work; see what's being done in our
18 hospitals and universities in rehabilitation and see that more
19 is done.

20 The greatest waste in America is the waste of people.
21 It is an incredible waste, a shameful waste, and we can't
22 afford it. We just can't afford it.

23 We are living in such a competitive world with so
24 many serious problems besetting us, we can't afford to lose
25 anybody. We can't afford to have anyone who has anything to

1 contribute to the public or community good, not to have that
2 person on the job as a full participant in this experience of
3 our democracy.

4 Meet the targets that you have set and raise the
5 targets, and then go out to achieve your goals. What you are
6 doing is not only economically right -- and it sure is -- but
7 it's morally right. You will feel better.

8 In the future, despite our progress, we need to
9 recognize that we face more medical problems, and most of our
10 efforts must now be directed against the fortresses which thus
11 far have resisted progress.

12 I refer to such fortresses as disability, as mental
13 illness, mental retardation and epilepsy.

14 Recent history proves that the walls of an enemy
15 fortress like polio or tuberculosis will come tumbling down
16 if public and private forces combine to concentrate national
17 attention upon them.

18 I repeat, my fellow Americans, we can do whatever we
19 want to do if we just make up our minds to do it and dedicate
20 the resources of this nation to that goal.

21 Long since, American genius broke the sound barrier.
22 That is old hat now. Now, let's break some other barriers.

23 We are hard at work in this country breaking the
24 prejudice barrier, the barrier of the racism and racial intoler-
25 ance, which has been a disability of over 20,000,000 of our

1 Americans because some people had closed minds and closed hearts,
2 and, my fellow Americans, we have suffered such tragic losses:
3 losses in prestige, losses in decency, and losses in our economy.

4 The President's Council of Economic Advisors told the
5 President one month ago that the annual loss from discrimination
6 in employment alone because of racial prejudice was over
7 \$20,000,000,000. Twenty billion dollars! Oh, what we could
8 do with \$20,000,000,000, and we are now determined that we will
9 break down these barriers, that we will smash open these doors
10 and go into the doors of opportunity and remove these walls of
11 resistance. And it is going to mean a better country.

12 We are going to do it through a change of heart, a
13 change of heart, a change of program, through education, and
14 we are going to do it accepting people as people and in respect
15 of human dignity.

16 So, let us break the prejudice barrier, smash it to
17 pieces and release the untold energies of millions of people
18 in the days to come, and we are going to break the poverty
19 barrier.

20 I know I have heard many people say we are not doing
21 enough, but we are starting and we are going to go at it
22 methodically and with determination. We will make some mistakes,
23 but let me say to you, my friends, until such a day, such a day
24 that you will not make mistakes, if you wait until then, you
25 will never start. If we stumble and fall, we will get up and

1 try again, and if we stumble again, we will get up and try
2 again, until we help people help themselves and give people
3 in America a chance to be full citizens in the fullest sense
4 of that wonderful word of citizenship. We are breaking the
5 disability barrier, and we are determined to tear it down.
6 We want no walls in America; we want gates of opportunity, and
7 we are breaking the psychological barrier which denies any
8 man his due; so you go to your work, remembering this: Jobs
9 for disabled Americans are a blessing, not only for the disabled
10 but for every American, and our task is to multiply that blessing,
11 doing here on earth the work that we are supposed to do and, in
12 a very real sense, doing God's work for God's people, just
13 people.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Harold Russell
Chairman



The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped

WASHINGTON, D.C., 20210

FOR RELEASE:

REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

Trans.

PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED

ANNUAL MEETING - APRIL 30, 1965

Four years ago, Emik Avakian won the President's Trophy as Handicapped Man of the Year. Mr. Avakian is severely cerebral palsied, almost unable to sit in a wheelchair.

Years ago, he had to fight his way into college against the advice of counselors who thought he was too severely handicapped. Now an electrical engineer, he is also a brilliant scientist. He devised a lightning-fast reservation system whereby airlines can tell how many seats are available on all flights.

He couldn't hold a pencil, so he invented a typewriter that could be operated with his breath. He is at present working on use of a computer to control radiation beams that might perform bloodless surgery on that part of the brain which, if injured, can cause cerebral palsy.

This disabled American acts to overcome not only his own disability but to make possible new vistas for the able as well as for the disabled. Others are joined in this struggle. This Administration is committed to it. And so are you.

This February, President Johnson wrote to the nation's employers:

(more)

"Given encouragement and hope, our handicapped citizens can competitively earn a useful place in our great land of opportunity. They have the courage. All they need is a chance to prove themselves."

It is you who are providing that chance -- you of governors' committees and mayors' committees, you who are leaders of business, of labor, civic groups, veterans, and other voluntary organizations.

Your teamwork with the President's Committees, the U.S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration and state rehabilitation agencies has opened employment doors which for too long were barred to the handicapped. You opened those closed doors by first opening closed minds. Those minds had arbitrarily rejected the disabled as being allegedly "unemployable." But "open minds ..." "open hearts ..." friendly outstretched hands have changed that picture.

Thus, as an example, last year, 8,300 men and women who had been regarded as completely outside the labor force -- because they were mentally retarded -- were put to gainful work. They represent only a small portion of the 3 million retarded who are capable of doing a job. But this important beginning does show what can be done.

I honor those -- in the National Association for Retarded Children -- and in cooperating organizations who blazed this path of progress.

This October will mark the 20th Anniversary of the first celebration of a special week to employ the handicapped.

Eighteen years ago it was my privilege, as Mayor of Minneapolis, to issue one of the first municipal proclamations for observance of that week. At that time, the secretary of our Mayor's Committee was a young Purple Heart veteran named Orville Freeman. Today, as Secretary of Agriculture, he is leading the fight to aid America's rural disabled.

(more)

In this auditorium today are many pioneers of jobs-for-the-handicapped. You have proven that it is definitely good business to employ the handicapped.

And it is good government and good citizenship to get a disabled man off the welfare roll onto a payroll and a tax roll.

For years, the roll call of honor for the handicapped was headed by the predecessor of your great Harold Russell a fellow Minnesotan, the late General Melvin Maas. Though blind, General Maas "saw" this need of the Nation and responded magnificently to it.

He led us closer to the time when all men and women in our society will have opportunity to develop their talents and skills.

The goal of this Administration is -- as it was General Maas' goal -- opportunity for all Americans. We seek opportunity for all who would work to lift themselves.

The handicapped do want to work. The handicapped do not want pity. They do not want handouts. And they do not want "made-work." They ask only that they be trained for meaningful jobs they can perform and that, whenever necessary, jobs be adapted so they can perform them.

That is not too much to ask.

But the job-seeking handicapped comprise a long waiting list. Three million Americans have disabilities which still keep them on the fringes of community and family life.

Year by year, the numbers of the rehabilitated are -- fortunately -- rising. In five years, we hope to reach the annual mark of rehabilitating 200,000 each year.

But the time gap implicit in these figures confirms how far we still have to go.

(more)

Meanwhile time hangs heavy on those waiting their chance for a job. Is there anyone among us who can calculate the anguish of the man or woman forced to wait or who vainly apply for employment -- time after time -- only to be rejected?

For these men and women we are determined to open up more jobs. Jobs are needed, too, not just for the disabled -- but for millions of the impoverished.

The poor and the disabled are frequently one and the same.

Some 40 percent of the disabled are poor.

It is no coincidence, too, that the poor are blighted far more frequently by mental retardation and mental illness than are more fortunate citizens.

One handicap tends to breed others. A vicious cycle goes on and on. Starting with disability or with poverty, it leads to other forms of deprivation -- to psychological, cultural, social or other wants.

To remedy this tragic pattern -- to provide for the deprived, to uplift the poor, the disabled -- a peaceful war is being fought in this nation.

The war against poverty is simultaneously a war against disability -- to prevent disability before it strikes ... to treat disability if it does strike ... to cure disability, if possible ... or to relieve it and to rehabilitate the victim.

Against single or multiple handicaps, your Administration is mobilizing every sound weapon that the ingenuity of man's mind and the devotion of man's heart can devise.

History-making legislation -- federal aid to primary and secondary education, including special education ... aid to evaluate the potential of the disabled and to expand sheltered workshops ... aid for regional medical centers -- is being passed.

(more)

It is being passed because of the broad support of American citizens -- especially the citizens in this audience.

I urge you in this audience not just to receive -- passively -- the qualified handicapped who are sent to you, and not just to hire them.

I urge you to go out and see the handicapped -- where they live, where they train. See them in sheltered workshops. See them, too, in companies which are successfully employing them. Listen to them.

Then participate in the new program of employment seminars which mayors throughout America are now organizing.

Examine the program of jobs-for-the-handicapped in your own state and community. Meet the targets you have set for job placements and then go on to achieve still higher targets.

What you are doing is not only economically right but morally right.

In the future, despite our progress, we face formidable problems.

Most of our efforts must now be directed against fortresses which thus far have resisted progress. I refer to such citadels as mental illness, mental retardation and epilepsy.

Recent history proves that the walls of an enemy fortress -- like poliomyelitis or tuberculosis -- "will come tumbling down" if public and private forces combine to concentrate national attention upon it.

Long since, American genius broke the sound barrier. Now let us break the prejudice barrier -- the poverty barrier -- the disability barrier -- the psychological barrier which denies any man his due.

Jobs for disabled Americans are a blessing for every American. Let us multiply that blessing.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org