

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

MINNESOTA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION KICK-OFF DINNER

SHERATON MOTOR INN
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

SEPTEMBER 22, 1973

A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY HAS BEEN LAID UPON YOU AS THE MAJOR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF HANDICAPPED CITIZENS IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA. YOU MUST BE THE SPOKESMEN, IN A CRUCIAL TIME, OF THE RIGHT OF THE DISABLED TO COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION SERVICES.

IT IS UNCONSCIONABLE THAT FOR MILLIONS OF HANDICAPPED PERSONS ACROSS AMERICA, THE PROMISE OF AN EQUAL CHANCE TO LEARN AND TO WORK TO THE MAXIMUM OF THEIR ABILITIES, AND TO LIVE AS EQUAL, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES, REMAINS ONLY A DISTANT MIRAGE, DESPITE THE ENACTMENT BY CONGRESS OF SOME FOUR MAJOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION LAWS OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES.

AMERICANS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY, OR BEHAVIORALLY DISABLED ARE NOT ASKING FOR A HANDOUT. THEY ASK ONLY FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE COUNSELLED, TO BE EVALUATED, TO BE TRAINED, AND TO HAVE EMPLOYMENT COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR ABILITIES WITHOUT PREJUDICE. THEY ASK FOR THIS COMPENSATORY OR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION HELP ONLY TO MAKE THEM PRODUCTIVE, SELF-RELIANT, AND COMPETITIVE, AND THEY ASK THAT THIS BE DONE WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

THE TIME HAS COME TO FIRMLY ESTABLISH THE RIGHTS OF HANDICAPPED AMERICANS TO SELF-RESPECT AND TO SUCCEED TO THE BEST OF THEIR CAPABILITIES. IN SHORT, TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF AMERICAN SOCIETY, NO LONGER SHOVED ASIDE WITH CONDESCENDING PITY.

I THINK SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG WITH THE PRIORITIES OF THE ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON WHEN, AS A RESULT OF PRESIDENTIAL VETOES, IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO BRING SEVEN TIMES TO THE SENATE FLOOR IN THE LAST YEAR LEGISLATION FOR THE EXTENSION AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ACT.

I STRONGLY HOPE THAT THIS TIME WE HAVE SUCCEEDED, WITH THE RECENT ADOPTION BY BOTH THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE OF THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R.8070, THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973.

THE PRESIDENT HAS CONFRONTED A TENACIOUS, STUBBORN, DRIVING CONGRESS ON THIS MATTER. WE HAVE COME BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN, PRESENTING A BILL TO THE PRESIDENT THAT DEMANDS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WIDEN ITS NARROW RANGE OF VISION ON WHAT CONSTITUTES A PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES AND GENUINE PRIORITIES ON BEHALF OF THE HANDICAPPED.

AND WE HAVE INSISTED THAT THESE PROGRAMS BE BACKED UP BY ADEQUATE FUNDING, WITH A BILL AUTHORIZING \$1.54 BILLION OVER TWO FISCAL YEARS, OR \$138 MILLION MORE THAN THE PRESIDENT WANTED.

I AM ADVISED THAT FULL FUNDING OF THIS AUTHORIZATION WOULD PROVIDE OVER \$12 MILLION FOR REHABILITATION PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA IN FISCAL 1974 -- A \$1 MILLION INCREASE OVER FISCAL YEAR 1973.

THE NEED FOR THE IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS LEGISLATION IS CRUCIAL. AS AUGUST GEHRKE, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION, STATE OF MINNESOTA, COMMENTED IN A RECENT LETTER TO ME ABOUT CURRENT FEDERAL EVALUATIONS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES:

"I CONSIDER THIS PERHAPS THE DARKEST HOUR FOR
THE REHABILITATION OF THE HANDICAPPED. . . ."

YET THE FACTS WHICH GUS ALSO PROVIDED ME ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OVER THE PAST FISCAL
YEAR DEMONSTRATE CLEARLY WHAT CAN AND MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED.

A TOTAL DVR CASELOAD OF OVER 41,000 INCLUDED 6,331 WHO WERE
REHABILITATED, INCLUDING PRIORITY GROUPS OF ALCOHOLICS, DRUG
ADDICTS, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, AND SOCIAL SECURITY
BENEFICIARIES. IF THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT UNDER-
STAND WHAT THIS MEANS IN TERMS OF THE RESTORATION OF HUMAN
DIGNITY, THEN LET IT ATTEND TO ONE SOLID ECONOMIC ARGUMENT:

THE ANNUAL INCOME OF REHABILITANTS IN OUR STATE TOTALLED OVER
\$36 MILLION, RESULTING IN A RETURN TO GOVERNMENT OF \$3.8 MILLION
IN PERSONAL INCOME TAXES.

THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 BUILDS UPON SUCH RECORDS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND REACHES OUT TO FURTHER CLIENT GROUPS WHO CAN AND MUST BE SERVED.

IN ADDITION TO EXTENDING BASIC STATE GRANT PROGRAMS, THIS BILL CALLS FOR A NEW FOCUS IN REHABILITATION SERVICES UPON INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SEVERE HANDICAPS -- THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TOO LONG IGNORED UNDER THE GUIDELINES OF CURRENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

REFLECTING CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN OVER AN INADEQUATE LEVEL OF PRIORITY ON VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION IN FEDERAL DOMESTIC SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS, THE BILL PLACES NEW RESPONSIBILITIES UPON THE REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION TO INSURE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE BASIC PROGRAMS.

AND IT PROVIDES THAT THE RSA COMMISSIONER WILL NOW BE APPOINTED DIRECTLY BY THE PRESIDENT, RATHER THAN BY THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE.

OTHER PROVISIONS OF THIS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION CALL FOR:

-- NEW DIRECTIONS TOWARD SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF HANDICAPPED PERSONS, THROUGH REORIENTED RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROGRAMS, AND THROUGH MAXIMUM UTILIZATION OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND MEDICAL RESOURCES TOWARD OVERCOMING CURRENT BARRIERS TO REHABILITATION;

-- A FEDERAL MORTGAGE INSURANCE PROGRAM FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NECESSARY REHABILITATION FACILITIES; AND

-- THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARCHITECTURAL AND TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS COMPLIANCE BOARD TO HELP ENFORCE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS THAT THESE FACILITIES BE MADE ACCESSIBLE TO HANDICAPPED PERSONS.

I AM PARTICULARLY GRATIFIED THAT THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 REQUIRES A NEW AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM BY ALL FEDERAL AGENCIES, UNDER THE OVERSIGHT OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, AND THAT A SIMILAR PROGRAM IS MANDATED FOR ALL FEDERAL CONTRACTORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS. I BELIEVE THAT UNDER SUCH MEASURES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN ASSUME A LONG-OVERDUE LEADERSHIP IN SETTING THE EXAMPLE FOR THE NATION ON THE EMPLOYMENT AND JOB ADVANCEMENT OF HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS.

THESE NEW INITIATIVES ON THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF THE HANDICAPPED RESPOND TO AN ORIGINAL BILL WHICH I JOINTLY SPONSORED, TO EXTEND TO THE HANDICAPPED THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT AGAINST UNFAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES.

A FURTHER BILL WHICH I INTRODUCED WAS INCORPORATED IN THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO REQUIRE THAT THERE BE NO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST QUALIFIED HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS IN ANY PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY RECEIVING FEDERAL FUNDS.

TWO OTHER AMENDMENTS WHICH I SPONSORED ARE ALSO CARRIED THROUGH IN THIS LEGISLATION.

ONE WOULD ADD A PROGRAM OF REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS DISABLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY. AND A PROVISION IN THE BILL FOR AN INTENSIVE STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS OF LONG-TERM CLIENTS IN SHELTERED WORKSHOPS CONSTITUTES AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD IMPLEMENTING THE INTENT OF MY AMENDMENT TO ASSURE THESE PERSONS AN ADEQUATE SUPPLEMENTARY INCOME, ENABLING THEM TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

IT IS MY SINCERE HOPE THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL QUICKLY SIGN THIS MAJOR LEGISLATION INTO LAW. THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED, THE MENTALLY RETARDED, AND THE MENTALLY ILL ARE NOT ONLY WORTHY OF THE COMPASSION AND CARE OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. THEIR HUMAN DIGNITY ALSO MERITS THE RESPECT OF SOCIETY AND OUR GOVERNMENT.

BEFORE THIS ADMINISTRATION MAKES ANY MORE SNAP JUDGMENTS ON NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND ON WHERE FEDERAL MONEYS SHOULD BE SAVED, I SUGGEST THAT IT SEE THE HOPE AND THE PROMISE THAT ARE IN THE EYES OF THOUSANDS ENROLLED IN THESE VITAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS. AND I SUGGEST THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION MUST TOTALLY REFORM ITS VALUE SYSTEM THAT HAS DENIED PEOPLE IN NEED SUCH CRUCIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO OBTAIN GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT AND TO KNOW SELF-RESPECT IN BEING ENABLED TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY.

IT IS CLEAR THAT CONGRESS MUST MAINTAIN CLOSE SCRUTINY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT, EVEN AFTER IT HAS BEEN SIGNED INTO LAW, DUE TO RECENT REPORTS OF CONTINGENCY PLANS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE TO IMPLEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS THAT RUN COMPLETELY COUNTER TO CONGRESSIONAL INTENT.

ONE WELL-KNOWN PROPOSAL UNDER CONSIDERATION IN HEW IS THAT THE TRAINING AND REHABILITATION FEATURES OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM BE REPLACED BY A NEW CASH ASSISTANCE SCHEME. I AM AMAZED AT THE FAILURE SUCH A PROPOSAL REFLECTS, TO RECOGNIZE THE VITAL NECESSITY OF CAREFULLY DEVELOPED HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.

HOWEVER, SUCH A STUDY IN DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED PHILOSOPHIES, SUCH A DARK HOUR FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE HANDICAPPED, CAN AND MUST BE TRANSFORMED INTO A NEW DAY OF OPPORTUNITY.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST BE MADE AWARE OF THE TRUE ISSUES AND OF THE GREAT RESOURCE WHICH MILLIONS OF HANDICAPPED CITIZENS REPRESENT FOR THIS NATION, SO THAT THEY CAN RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY AND DEMAND THAT OUR GOVERNMENT IN FACT HELP

THE TIME HAS COME TO PLACE THIS ADMINISTRATION ON
NOTICE THAT THE NEEDS OF HANDICAPPED PERSONS ARE A VITAL
NATIONAL CONCERN THAT MUST NO LONGER BE IGNORED. IT IS
INCUMBENT UPON YOU AND UPON CONGRESS NOW TO BE THE SPOKES-
MEN FOR THESE FELLOW CITIZENS. WE MUST INSIST THAT THE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INCLUDE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMPASSION AND OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN
DIGNITY.

THIS IS OUR OBLIGATION. BUT THIS IS ALSO OUR GREAT
HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY, TO MAKE THIS NATION BECOME WHAT IT
WAS TRULY MEANT TO BE FOR ALL ITS PEOPLE.

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