REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

AT DEDICATION OF GEORGE HEGYI TRAINING CENTER

DERBY, CONNECTICUT

JUNE 6, 1971 - 2:30 P.M.

I am delighted to join with you today in this joyful occasion -- the dedication of the George Hegyi Training Center. I congratulate you on this outstanding accomplishment, on the realization of a dream that five communities working together have made possible for their mentally retarded citizens.

As has so often been the case, the parents of persons with this handicap have led the way. Your supportive voices and cooperative leadership have succeeded in bringing together the talent and the bricks and the mortar to give opportunity to your children.

For whatever reasons we have been slow as a nation to acknowledge -- or at least to provide to every child in our country the fundamental right that he should have to educational and health services from birth.

If that child be handicapped, then he and his family have all the more need for this type of supportive assistance. Without good health and training, he will forever be denied the equality of opportunity that should be his birthright in a democracy.

Experts in child development advise us that the range of an individual's intelligence is determined during the very early years of life. And yet, because of the lack of early childhood educational and health services, the majority of children who are mentally retarded are not discovered until they reach school age.

Thus, some very valuable years are lost. Because of our inaction we find children lingering in classrooms ill prepared to serve them and often unnecessarily handicapped by such disorders as vision and hearing difficulties which could have been corrected had they been discovered in a good health screening program.

There is no question, but that innovative attention to early childhood health and education is desperately needed. There are encouraging signs that this is being recognized, but organizations such as yours must still provide the impetus necessary to carry the search for answers forward.

With the construction of this center, you are highlighting the tremendous value of small, well-placed facilities right in the communities where the retarded live.

Too many of our nation's six million mentally retarded citizens are hidden away from the world in inadequate, outdated facilities which are in effect massive, human warehouses. Instead they should be living, going to school, being trained -- and, if they can, working for a living in the communities of which they are really a part.

There continues to be a tremendous need for small community based facilities of all kinds -- schools, sheltered workshops, training centers, group homes and other smaller residential units, social centers, where those who need support and guidance can obtain it while still living close to the people they know and love.

To achieve these goals we must give the public at large a clearer understanding of the handicapped person and his potential.

A survey for the President's Committee on Mental Retardation has revealed that ignorance of the potential of those with this handicap and public misinformation are the major reasons why communities fail to provide adequate programs and services for the retarded.

They are also the reasons why many parents do not come forward for help for their children.

Those making the survey wisely urged that the potential achievements of the retarded as independent members of the community and as economically productive persons should be the primary focus of a public information program.
I heartily concur. As Mrs. Humphrey often reminds me, it is time to cease talking about what the retarded cannot do and concentrate on what they can do.

There are, of course, those severely retarded persons who cannot benefit from training, nor is it advisable for them to remain within the family unit.

But, if they could be housed closer to the communities in which their families reside, it would greatly relieve parents who could visit them more often and reassure themselves that their children were receiving adequate care.

We should cease hiding our retarded, as we have our mentally ill, out in the countryside.

If we can help focus attention on the needs, on new concepts of prevention, retraining and vocational achievement, it may be that far less money is ultimately required than would be spent perpetuating outmoded, unproductive, custodial concepts.

What makes it imperative for us to give our best efforts to increasing opportunity for our retarded citizens is the fact that at least one third of the six million persons who are mentally retarded today are capable of earning a living and being self-supporting, productive members of the community if adequate residential facilities and vocational help can be provided for them.

Under the prodding of President John Kennedy, whose sister is mentally retarded, the Federal Government discovered this new labor resource. It has a successful hiring program that has placed some 7,300 men and women into jobs, and at least a dozen state governments and some innovative private businesses have followed suit.

What excites government and these businessmen is the realization that the retarded can perform routine tasks with expertise when properly trained and they do not readily tire of this type of work. Therefore, labor expenses are reduced through eliminating the usual high rate of turnover in these positions and more qualified workers can be given jobs with greater challenge.

As I once reminded the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped in Washington, we are an affluent country, but we are not so rich that we can be prodigal with any human resources. Our handicapped must be able to participate fully in every phase of society. We simply cannot afford to be deprived of their talents and skills. We cannot afford the loss of their wasted ability.
- Joseph Ramano - President
- Mayor Ramano

Dr. Foot (Commissioner of Health)
congressman John Morgridge
Mr. Deering (M.C.)
Ms. Ann Harvey (announcer)
Ms. Sue Meyers, Stanley Meyers

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Ms. Stanley Meyers, Stanley Meyers

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Reverend

Hurricanes
Scouts

Joseph Ferrara

Bud Spencer

"Vicki" Olympic Medalist

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For whatever reasons, we have been slow as a nation to acknowledge -- or at least to provide to every child in our country the fundamental right that he should have to educational and health services from birth.

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