

Dr Collins
Art Edgerton

Paul Strachan
5 Essay Contest winners

✓ Ch
Harris
Russell

COMMENTS BY
VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
AT
PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE HANDICAPPED
THURSDAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1967

Spring-time in our nation's Capital brings
Cherry Blossoms, the baseball season and an even more
refreshing event -- your Annual Meeting of the Presi-
dent's Committee on the Handicapped.

What a "vitamin tonic" your meeting is --
not just to a former pharmacist, but to everyone
privileged to see the zest of champions for human
dignity at work.

It is a joy to visit with you again --
for this third year in a row. I bring you the
renewed personal greetings of President Johnson. ☺

L You are the leaders of his Committee, the President's
Committee.

You represent as courageous and far-visioned
a group of men and women as will assemble at any time
in our nation's Capital. You are the voice, the con-
science, the strong "right arm" of your President in
the good fight for economic justice for the disabled.

L As individuals, ^{many of} you may need a cane or
crutch or electronic aid, a brace or wheel-chair,

but you have what life really requires: You have
heart and spirit and will. L You do move -- not just
yourselves -- but the whole nation forward -- forward

over obstacles of misunderstanding and indifference.

L You help the disabled move forward through factory
gates that for too long have been half-closed, forward
to better white collar and blue collar jobs, yes,
forward to buildings and homes designed for the
handicapped.

As I look around this room today, I see
so many living examples of triumphant human spirit,
of the victory of ability over disability.

L There is so much in my heart that I would
like to say about each of your leaders, about Chair-
man Harold Russell, about Colonel Bill McCahill,
Bernie Posner, and so many others.

L I want to convey my special congratulations
to Art Edgerton. What an inspiration Art is as the
winner of the "Handicapped Man of the Year" Award!

Edgerton
L Art symbolizes not only those disabled Americans who
deservedly win public acclaim, but the vast number

of other disabled. L They are relatively unknown,

but each day, they win quiet victories over impairment.

The presence of my old and dear friend,
a great pioneer, Paul Strachan, is a vivid reminder
of how this entire program got started -- in Employ
the Handicapped Week and in the President's Committee
on the Handicapped. L Paul never would quite "hear"
a "No" answer when a "Yes" was crucial to an advance
for the disabled.

L Loss of hearing, loss of sight, loss of arms
or limbs, paralysis, cerebral palsy, mental handicaps,
convulsive disorders -- this is not a catalog of
defeat, my friends; it is a cavalcade of victories
of the spirit over the flesh, of ~~spunk~~ ^{courage} over resignation.

L I salute you. I pledge your Government's
continued all-out effort for this cause.


We have come a long way. We are approaching the long-sought goal, next year, of 200,000 Americans to be vocationally rehabilitated in a 12-month period. That is still not enough, not nearly enough; the human backlog -- awaiting training and re-training -- is still enormous, but we are at least keeping up our pace.

In this year's budget, I am glad to say, the President has proposed \$331 million for Federal matching grants to the States; it was only \$23 million in 1955 and \$171 million in the 1966 fiscal year.

Our State Governors and legislators deserve credit for their increased investment in matching the Federal grants.

But what better investment could they or we make than in increased earning power, increased tax-paying power, dignity power for the disabled?

Before me, I see another form of power -- the "youth power" of the winners of the high school essay context -- "Ability Counts." I congratulate these fine young men and women.


 The well-being of youth itself is very much on our minds and in our hearts.

At this very time, I am engaged in an urgent new program which will be of particular help to the nation's young -- including, hopefully, the physically and mentally handicapped. By Executive Order, President Johnson has established a new President's Council on Youth Opportunity, of which I am privileged to be Chairman. Its goal is to help expand job as well as recreational opportunities for the young, especially during the hot summer months ahead.

In 1965, and again in 1966, with the help of private industry, we helped generate 1 million extra jobs for needy teenagers. We are going to far surpass that mark this year.

It is my hope that during the coming summer months, disadvantaged youngsters who have handicaps will be given special opportunity.

Simultaneously, we expect to expand summer camp, sports, educational, cultural and other programs, for millions of well and handicapped youngsters in Inner Cities, in ghetto areas, in sweltering tenements.

You who have been bed-ridden, you who have lived so many years in wheel chairs -- you know what it is to be confined -- physically or mentally -- without suitable outlets for energy or interest.

5-C

This is what I ask every Governor, every Mayor, every civic organization to help provide -- suitable outlets for the energies and interests of restless young people during the hot, otherwise idle and frustrated months ahead.

One of the President's mandates is for "programs designed to identify, diagnose and treat the illnesses and handicapping conditions of youth who participate in these summer programs."

↳ We do need "early (medical) warning systems" to detect disability.

↳ No one here need be reminded that much of the anguish of a disability might be avoided if only illness and potential disability could be spotted in time and corrective action taken.

↳ Our goal, however, is to open health and other opportunities for every age bracket and not just for the summer months -- for the entire year. !

↳ Freedom is our goal -- freedom from the tyranny of a birth or later defect, freedom from the insecurity of joblessness or underemployment, freedom from discrimination.

There is just one so-called "National Liberation Front" which all Americans can rightly support. I refer to a voluntary, truly democratic alliance in our country to liberate human beings from the bondage of hopelessness, of despair, of bleak, barren lives.

Some people offer cure-alls; "there ought to be a law," they say; or "we ought to repeal some laws."

↳ But we have good laws for the handicapped; our job is to fulfill them and make sure they are not crippled or starved by forces of reaction.

↳ Make no mistake; backward-looking forces are definitely at work; they may act under many high-sounding appeals; but their target is the same -- to undermine the War Against Poverty, the peaceful effort for human rights, to tear up the foundations of equal education, equal housing, equal jobs for all.

Let us remember --

Equality must mean equality for all -- no exceptions, no "yes, buts", no asterisked footnotes, imposing limits.

The sacred documents -- the charters -- of this land do not promise justice and equality just for the physically and mentally blessed, or for geniuses, or for the rich, the good-looking, the clean-cut, the city dweller, the Caucasian -- but for all God's children, of every race, creed, color, of every circumstance of birth, of every level of I.Q.

Not long ago, it was my pleasure to see some of the remarkable handiwork of a group of the handicapped, in this instance, the mentally retarded. Our good friend, Hank Viscardi, one of the most remarkable leaders in this entire program -- showed members of the President's Committee on Mental

Retardation some perfectly beautiful glass engraved plates his workers had made. Mrs. Humphrey is a member of the President's Committee and is particularly interested in opening vocational opportunities for the retarded. Seeing that impressive glassware served as another reminder of what so many individuals can do -- if given the chance, if given training.

L What does it really take? It takes precisely what this audience represents:

-- volunteer-power;

-- work-power.

L You are citizen-volunteers -- of the President's Committee, of Governors' Committees, of local committees in hundreds of towns. L You are the partners of professionals -- of physicians and rehabilitation specialists, of placement experts. And you are doers -- speakers -- petitioners -- catalysts.

If some volunteers could bring about the amazing progress you have already achieved, just think what two times and three times your number could do -- can do -- should do -- in the bright years ahead.

So, I ask: Whom and how many have you recruited lately? Have you inventoried your lists of volunteers? Have you shelved, or, better still, brought to life any "deadwood" who do not actually contribute to this cause? Have you reached out to every segment of opinion moulders in your community? Have you enlisted the talent, the drive, the zest of youth?

And what about your constituency? Have you sought jobs for everyone -- not just for the "walking wounded" -- but for the elderly victim of degenerative disease, for the hidden away, the restored mind; for the totally rejected, the despised --

the ex-alcoholic, the disabled ex-convict, the disfigured?

Every life is worth saving -- salvaging.

We are an affluent country, enjoying full employment and unprecedented prosperity; but we are not so rich that we can be prodigal with any human resources. Our handicapped must be enabled to participate fully in every phase of society. We simply cannot afford to be deprived of their talents and skills. We cannot afford the economic loss of their wasted ability.

And we cannot be faithful to our own inner voice, to our religion, to our ethics by being untrue to those who have suffered some physical or mental misfortune.

I believe in people helping people -- now.

Every time a new trainee learns a skill in a sheltered workshop, every time an epileptic punches a time-clock in a good job; every time a blind person nimbly assembles a delicate instrument, every time a paraplegic wheels up a ramp to an assembly line or desk; every time an amputee -- a deaf person -- a mute -- enjoys the thrill of opening a new pay envelope, he or she is a living testimonial to our enlightenment and our justice and our plain good sense.

We need millions more of such "living monuments" -- human beings whose enhanced skills and happier lives attest to their own and to society's faith.

This is my message today -- a message of pride in the past, of salute to the present and commitment to an ever brighter future for the handicapped.

Let all year be springtime, hope-time,
fulfillment-time for the handicapped.

#####



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