

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP

Minneapolis, Minnesota

June 12, 1977

I always consider it safer to speak after my wife because then I can defend myself.

Joking aside, we are profoundly united in our concern for the mentally retarded. Muriel's involvement has been more direct and personal, while I have worked in the policymaking realm.

Last month I spoke at the dedication of a home for severely retarded children. Opportunity Workshop represents another phase of the social response to the problem of retardation.

There is an immediate protective impulse toward the retarded child that makes it easier to win public support for his care, treatment and education. Regrettably, when this same child becomes an adult, he may face a world of indifference and even suspicion and hostility. Yet, what is needed is a helping hand to enable this adult to function within the community.

Fortunately, our nation is awakening to the plight of its handicapped citizens.

We are witnessing a revolution in the public attitude toward the retarded and in their treatment. Retarded persons once were seen as a family affliction or disgrace to be hidden from public view. Little thought was given to their own feelings, needs and rights. The potential for development was underestimated and ignored.

We prescribed what we thought was good for them. We did not put ourselves in their shoes, and consider their feelings, their hopes and their aspirations.

This approach has changed dramatically. We no longer believe that institutions exist to segregate the retarded from their relatives and society and do little else. As the focus shifts from custodial care to development, there is a corresponding shift from pessimism to hope, and from public indifference to active and supportive concern.

We believe that institutions should exist to aid the integration of the handicapped into our society in a way which permits them to share, in as full a measure as they can, the responsibilities, the joys and the satisfactions of a normal life.

Minnesota has a progressive record in developing community-based facilities for the mentally retarded who otherwise would be institutionalized. In the late 1960's there were about 20 such facilities in the State. In 1977, there are nearly 150 with a total population of over 3,000 -- equal to the population in state hospitals, I am told.

This development has outpaced national policy. Some group homes find themselves saddled with inappropriate and excessive regulations. Nurses from Clara Doerr have written the Department of Health, Education and Welfare on just this issue. And your entire Congressional delegation has done the same.

Without lessening the high standards of safety and sanitation, care and treatment for the mentally retarded, I believe we can and should recognize the distinct nature and purpose of community-based facilities. Regulations necessary to promote quality care should simultaneously advance the national goal of deinstitutionalization.

We will continue to work with you to resolve these problems.

Sometimes trends become visible only in retrospect. But the progress achieved for the handicapped in the 1970's is clearly comparable to the great civil rights break-through for black Americans in the 1960's.

Congress has enacted major legislation in the areas of developmental disabilities, education of the handicapped, vocational rehabilitation and mental health.

And these laws mandate priority attention for the most severely handicapped.

One measure of the impact of this statutory priority is the increasing number of severely disabled persons who are being served in this nation's rehabilitation programs, including sheltered workshops. In the past, these people had little hope of achieving the sense of purpose, satisfaction and self-respect that comes with successfully fulfilling a useful and productive role.

At the same time, only five percent of the total workshop clientele support themselves on their own earnings. Half depend on their families and another 45 percent receive public support. Workshops are plagued by the problems of low wages, boring work and a shortage of contracts.

The success that Opportunity Workshop achieves in improved business management and in the development of new types of job training, especially in the labor-short service sector, can provide important lessons for public policy. It will make private industry more receptive to this available, dependable labor pool for routine and even relatively complex tasks.

As many of you know, I have addressed the problem of low wages through a proposal for a demonstration program of wage supplements to long-term employees of sheltered workshops. The operation of this program would permit us to evaluate whether this approach would be an effective response to the substandard wages and disincentives in our current system.

I want to mention one more milestone for the handicapped; the regulations recently issued to implement section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibit discrimination against the disabled.

These regulations will open doors and widen opportunities for the retarded in education, jobs, health care and public services. I hope and expect that they will help overcome employer stereotypes that still impede placement of retarded workers.

The innovative and progressive policies of Opportunity Workshop reflect and support the move to integrate the handicapped more fully into society. All of you, and that includes Muriel, who are intimately connected with this important institution understand the challenge and rewards of your mission far better than I can express it.

On your continued commitment rests the future of literally hundreds of citizens. I congratulate you on the achievement we share today. Working together, we can continue to open doors of opportunity, transforming the night of despair and loneliness into the daylight of hope and dignity for ever-increasing numbers of our people.

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OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

JUNE 12, 1977

In Wagner, Kathy Bourne
Murvin & Healy

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THEN I CAN DEFEND MYSELF!

awaits { Erik LaVine
to { Ed Aspin

JOKING ASIDE, WE ARE PROFOUNDLY UNITED IN OUR CONCERN FOR THE
MENTALLY RETARDED. MURIEL'S INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN MORE DIRECT

AND PERSONAL, WHILE I HAVE WORKED IN THE POLICYMAKING REALM,
Legislation and

LAST MONTH I SPOKE AT THE DEDICATION OF A HOME FOR SEVERELY
- Howard Board
RETARDED CHILDREN. OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP REPRESENTS ANOTHER PHASE
OF THE SOCIAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF RETARDATION.

THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE PROTECTIVE IMPULSE TOWARD THE RETARDED
CHILD THAT MAKES IT EASIER TO WIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIS CARE,
TREATMENT AND EDUCATION. REGRETTABLY, WHEN THIS SAME CHILD
BECOMES AN ADULT, HE MAY FACE A WORLD OF INDIFFERENCE AND
EVEN SUSPICION AND HOSTILITY.

L YET, WHAT IS NEEDED IS A HELPING HAND TO ENABLE THIS ADULT TO
FUNCTION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

L *Federal-State governments are*
FORTUNATELY, OUR ~~NATION~~ AWAKENING TO THE PLIGHT OF ITS
HANDICAPPED CITIZENS.

L *great change*
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THE RETARDED AND IN THEIR TREATMENT. L RETARDED PERSONS ONCE WERE

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HOPES AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS.

THIS APPROACH HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY. WE NO LONGER BELIEVE
THAT ~~WE SHOULD BUILD FACILITIES TO~~ SEGREGATE THE RETARDED FROM THEIR

RELATIVES AND SOCIETY AND DO LITTLE ELSE. AS THE FOCUS SHIFTS
FROM CUSTODIAL CARE TO DEVELOPMENT, THERE IS A CORRESPONDING SHIFT
FROM PESSIMISM TO HOPE, AND FROM PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE TO ACTIVE
AND SUPPORTIVE CONCERN.

WE BELIEVE THAT ~~INSTITUTIONS~~ ^{programs + facilities} SHOULD EXIST TO AID THE INTEGRATION
OF THE HANDICAPPED INTO OUR SOCIETY IN A WAY WHICH PERMITS THEM
TO SHARE, IN AS FULL A MEASURE AS THEY CAN, THE RESPONSIBILITIES,
THE JOYS AND THE SATISFACTIONS OF A NORMAL LIFE.

MINNESOTA HAS A PROGRESSIVE RECORD IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY-
BASED FACILITIES FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED ~~WHO OTHERWISE~~

L IN THE LATE 1960's THERE WERE ABOUT 20 SUCH FACILITIES IN THE
STATE. h IN 1977, THERE ARE NEARLY 150 WITH A TOTAL POPULATION
OF OVER 3,500 -- EQUAL TO THE POPULATION IN STATE HOSPITALS,
I AM TOLD.

L THIS DEVELOPMENT HAS OUTPACED NATIONAL POLICY. h SOME GROUP
HOMES FIND THEMSELVES SADDLED WITH INAPPROPRIATE AND EXCESSIVE
REGULATIONS. h ^{Home} NURSES FROM CLARA DOERR HAVE WRITTEN THE DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE ON JUST THIS ISSUE. h AND YOUR
ENTIRE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION HAS DONE THE SAME.

L WITHOUT LESSENING THE HIGH STANDARDS OF SAFETY AND
SANITATION, CARE AND TREATMENT FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED, I
BELIEVE WE CAN AND SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE DISTINCT NATURE AND
PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY-BASED FACILITIES.

REGULATIONS NECESSARY TO PROMOTE QUALITY CARE SHOULD SIMULTANEOUSLY
ADVANCE THE NATIONAL GOAL OF DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION.

h WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH YOU TO RESOLVE THESE PROBLEMS.

✓ h SOMETIMES TRENDS BECOME VISIBLE ONLY IN RETROSPECT. BUT THE

✓ h PROGRESS ACHIEVED FOR THE HANDICAPPED IN THE 1970'S IS CLEARLY

COMPARABLE TO THE GREAT CIVIL RIGHTS BREAK-THROUGH FOR ~~BLA~~ *racial*

minorities
~~AMERICANS~~ IN THE 1960'S.

h CONGRESS HAS ENACTED MAJOR LEGISLATION IN THE AREAS OF
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED,
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND MENTAL HEALTH.

h AND THESE LAWS MANDATE PRIORITY ATTENTION FOR THE MOST
SEVERELY HANDICAPPED.

ONE MEASURE OF THE IMPACT OF THIS STATUTORY PRIORITY IS
THE INCREASING NUMBER OF SEVERELY DISABLED PERSONS WHO ARE BEING
SERVED IN THIS NATION'S REHABILITATION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING
SHELTERED WORKSHOPS. IN THE PAST, THESE PEOPLE HAD LITTLE HOPE
OF ACHIEVING THE SENSE OF PURPOSE, SATISFACTION AND SELF-RESPECT
THAT COMES WITH SUCCESSFULLY FULFILLING A USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE
ROLE.

AT THE SAME TIME, ONLY FIVE PERCENT OF THE TOTAL WORKSHOP
CLIENTELE SUPPORT THEMSELVES ON THEIR OWN EARNINGS. HALF DEPEND
ON THEIR FAMILIES AND ANOTHER 45 PERCENT RECEIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT.
WORKSHOPS ARE PLAGUED BY THE PROBLEMS OF LOW WAGES, BORING WORK
AND A SHORTAGE OF CONTRACTS.

h THE SUCCESS THAT OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP ACHIEVES IN IMPROVED
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TYPES OF JOB
TRAINING, ESPECIALLY IN THE LABOR-SHORT SERVICE SECTOR, CAN
PROVIDE IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY. { IT WILL MAKE
PRIVATE INDUSTRY MORE RECEPTIVE TO THIS AVAILABLE, DEPENDABLE
LABOR POOL FOR ROUTINE AND EVEN RELATIVELY COMPLEX TASKS.

h AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, I HAVE ADDRESSED THE PROBLEM OF LOW
WAGES THROUGH A PROPOSAL FOR A DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM OF WAGE
SUPPLEMENTS TO LONG-TERM EMPLOYEES OF SHELTERED WORKSHOPS.

h THE OPERATION OF THIS PROGRAM WOULD PERMIT US TO EVALUATE
WHETHER THIS APPROACH WOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO THE
SUBSTANDARD WAGES AND DISINCENTIVES IN OUR CURRENT SYSTEM.

I WANT TO MENTION ONE MORE MILESTONE FOR THE HANDICAPPED;
THE REGULATIONS RECENTLY ISSUED TO IMPLEMENT SECTION 504
OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST THE DISABLED.

THESE REGULATIONS WILL OPEN DOORS AND WIDEN OPPORTUNITIES
FOR THE RETARDED IN EDUCATION, JOBS, HEALTH CARE AND PUBLIC
SERVICES. I HOPE AND EXPECT THAT THEY WILL HELP OVERCOME
EMPLOYER STEREOTYPES THAT STILL IMPEDE PLACEMENT OF RETARDED
WORKERS.

THE INNOVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE POLICIES OF OPPORTUNITY
WORKSHOP REFLECT AND SUPPORT THE MOVE TO INTEGRATE THE
HANDICAPPED MORE FULLY INTO SOCIETY.

ALL OF YOU ~~AND THAT INCLUDES MOTHERS~~ WHO ARE INTIMATELY
CONNECTED WITH THIS IMPORTANT ~~INSTITUTION~~ *facility* UNDERSTAND THE
CHALLENGE AND REWARDS OF YOUR MISSION FAR BETTER THAN I
CAN EXPRESS IT.

ON YOUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT RESTS THE FUTURE OF
LITERALLY HUNDREDS ^{*of thousands*} OF CITIZENS. I CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE
ACHIEVEMENT WE SHARE TODAY. WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN CONTINUE
TO OPEN DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY, TRANSFORMING THE NIGHT OF DESPAIR
AND LONELINESS INTO THE DAYLIGHT OF HOPE AND DIGNITY FOR
EVER-INCREASING NUMBERS OF OUR PEOPLE.

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