

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, U. S. REPRESENTATIVE,
SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND AT FOURTEENTH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE, NEW ENGLAND REGION NATIONAL REHABILITATION
ASSOCIATION, COLONY MOTOR HOTEL, CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND, ON
THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1961 AT 12:30 P.M.

This is a very real pleasure for me today - both because we are meeting in Rhode Island and because I share with you some strong convictions about the future of rehabilitation work for the disabled. The State of Rhode Island is proud to be your host for this annual conference of Region I of the National Rehabilitation Association, and I consider myself a part of the welcoming committee.

For many years I have lived close to the rehabilitation movement in this country. My work as Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee in Congress which deals with the public program of rehabilitation has required this. But my interest has gone beyond this requirement, for I believe very strongly in the concept of rehabilitation as a means of overcoming many of the problems of disability among our people.

I wish I could say that all members of Congress, all State legislators and all civic leaders are familiar with rehabilitation - but this is not true. It seems apparent to me that the technical and scientific side of rehabilitation has developed much faster than public awareness. As a result, the public support and the funds needed to expand this field are only a fraction of what they should be. Whether you own work is financed by contributions to a voluntary agency, or through appropriations by an agency of government, the public still sits in judgment on the worth and the size of your program.

We cannot expect the public or its leaders to support programs they scarcely know exist. To some extent, at least, I believe this problem rests in the minds of

rehabilitation workers themselves. Do you believe that rehabilitation can be a major weapon in controlling disability in this country - or are you content to be helpful around the edges of the problem?

I hope that each of you will ponder this question. Specifically, I hope that every NRA chapter in New England, and the Regional NRA itself, will ask some searching questions about the Association and its chapters and what they intend to do about neglected disability in this country.

There is need for a call to social action in this field and it seems to me that this Association is the logical spokesman. You have in the Association the professional voices which constitute rehabilitation

today - the physicians, the counselors, therapists, social workers, prosthetics experts and others. You have the advantage of many years of experience as a national organization in this field. You have chapters from coast to coast.

In short, those of us who are not professionals in rehabilitation are now looking to the Association for some bold and vigorous plans for advancing rehabilitation sharply in the next few years. We will not be content with "business as usual" and we will not accept "normal growth." There are too many thousands of disabled people looking at us to permit that.

We have in our hands today the knowledge we need to rehabilitate large numbers of handicapped people who are

living lives of misery and futility. Your responsibility does not stop with the disabled people you serve; you are equally responsible for those you are not serving. If the public awareness I mentioned a moment ago is ever to become a reality, it must come from you and your Association.

The theme of your conference is the rehabilitation of youth. There is no segment of your work more important than the rehabilitation of disabled young people who have before them the possibility with rehabilitation help of a full and productive life. By example, a good start has been made in the rehabilitation of the mentally retarded youth. And yet only a small fraction of this group is being served. I assure you that if the public is made aware of what

you have done for mentally retarded youth and what you could do, you will get the public support to do it.

I assure you of my support in such an effort. I believe that the Committee of which I am Chairman in the House of Representatives has already demonstrated its belief and its desire to see rehabilitation programs grow in this country. Last month the Committee reported an appropriations bill providing more than \$87 million for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the coming fiscal year beginning July 1. The largest amount was some \$64 1/2 million for grants to the 90 state agencies of the federal-state program of vocational rehabilitation.

Incidentally, if there is any confusion in this Region about the amount of this appropriation, I should

like to clear it up. The bill provides for an allotment base of \$90 million, and the allotments to the states will be on the basis of \$90 million. We know from experience, as do the OVR and the state agencies, that not all the funds allotted will be used by the states. Next year, with a \$90 million allotment base, the states will be able to match about \$64 1/2 million, and that is the amount in our bill. So it simply means that we approved an allotment base which will make a maximum amount of funds available to the states, and then appropriate what we know they will actually use. The allotment base principle has been in use for a number of years and it avoids appropriating large sums of money which we know would revert to the Treasury at the end of the year.

When I look at the appropriation request each year for grants to the states, I have, to put it mildly, mixed feelings. I appreciate the growth we are seeing in vocational rehabilitation services to the disabled. Here in the New England Region, the number of disabled people rehabilitated through the public program has almost doubled in the last 10 years. Yet when we look at the situation realistically, I think we have to admit that the rehabilitation of 4,400 people in these six states in 1960 is a far cry from facing up to needs.

So I sometimes wonder when I look at these appropriation requests. If it is a good investment of the taxpayers' money to rehabilitate 4,400 - why isn't it a good investment to rehabilitate 20,000?

As a matter of equity among our people, why do we restore some of them and ignore the rest?

Well, I say again - I believe the time has come for a strong social action program to face this whole question of neglected disability. I would hope that this Association will provide the leadership. There are many things under way today which makes the time auspicious. A program of research is now conducted through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, with many projects being carried out by sponsors here in the New England States. A training program is helping to expand the supply of professional staff to work with the disabled. Many of our universities and rehabilitation centers are serving as laboratories for research and for improving the training programs. In Washington

we have outstanding leadership from Miss Switzer and her staff in OVR. There is now an international program of rehabilitation research, just finishing its first year of operation, with 13 projects approved for investigations abroad. We have a growing number of voluntary organizations which are doing an excellent job in rehabilitation. We have a new administration in Washington which already has announced its support for expanding the vocational rehabilitation program.

There is, in other words, a momentum now which must not be lost. I look to the public and voluntary rehabilitation programs for both professional competence and social leadership. In particular, I hope you will be able to extend your work to a number of disability groups which today are receiving little more than token

services, in relation to their size and their need.

I have already mentioned the rehabilitation of the

mentally retarded, for whom we have made a good

beginning but only a beginning. Much the same can

be said of organized rehabilitation programs for those

who have suffered mental illness. Now we are

beginning to see a variety of programs aimed at

helping the discharged mental patient complete a

successful recovery at home and on the job.

Although your conference is on youth, I also

want to mention the aging. In the field of the

aging, we seem to talk a lot more than we act. You

may recall that I successfully sponsored legislation

to concentrate our local, state and national attention

on the needs of our older people through a White House

Conference on Aging, preceded by a series of local and state planning conferences. As most of you know, this White House Conference was held in January of this year. We spent a lot of money and frankly, in terms of a program of action, we have little to show for it at present. Our Committee made this clear in its report this year and asked the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to produce a plan of action. Our aging population, both as individuals and as a growing part of our society, must be provided for in better fashion than we are doing at present.

On this subject, a special word on rehabilitation is in order. For many years the vocational rehabilitation program has made special efforts to restore the older

worker to employment. In the last decade or so, much rehabilitation research has been aimed at geriatrics problems in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, workshops and other facilities. The results are encouraging. Between 1945 and 1960, the number of disabled persons over age 45 rehabilitated rose from around 7,000 to 28,000. In 1945, they represented 17 1/2 percent of the total - and in 1960, they amounted to more than 32 percent.

This experience gives us an idea of what we can accomplish for the many thousands of older disabled people - provided we commit ourselves to action.

If you and your Association are prepared to commit yourselves to a broad and vigorous program of action, aimed at the conquest of disability in this

country, I will be your enthusiastic partner. I have spent enough years in Rhode Island to know that New England can be a source of real leadership. I hope that you and your Association will demonstrate this again in the field of rehabilitation. For all the fine things you have done so far to add to the lives and the dignity of our disabled men and women in this area, I express my thanks. I hope these successes are only the forerunners of a tremendous expansion of rehabilitation in New England in the next few years.