

Remarks of
U. S. Representative John E. Fogarty
Second Congressional District of Rhode Island

First Statewide Public Meeting to Discuss
Provisions of Manpower Development and Training Act
Monday, May 7, 1962 at 12:15 P.M.
Sheraton-Biltmore Hotel
Providence, Rhode Island

Now that the Manpower Development and Training Act has been passed and signed by President Kennedy on March 15, 1962, we must see to it that the Act operates effectively in getting unemployed workers back at jobs. Today, you will have heard a great deal about how the Act will operate at the Federal, State and local levels. I should rather like to talk to you about the real meaning behind the Act. The people who conceived this piece of legislation and brought it into being subscribed by and large to four basic propositions that I should like to discuss with you during the next few minutes.

Proposition number one is that everyone can be trained. Aside from a few obvious exceptions, the overwhelming majority of human beings can be educated and trained to perform useful functions in this society. Scientific discovery made in recent years has shown that up until this time we have grossly underestimated the capacity of the human mind. We have been prone to relegate all too many human beings into such categories as slow learners, untrainable, mentally deficient, etc. Scientists have shown us that we have been wrong -- that the capacity of nearly every human mind is far greater than we had ever supposed it to be. What we have taken to be inability to learn was often the fault of our systems and methods rather than the people themselves.

By the same token, everyone can be retrained. Our experience here in Rhode Island as well as the rest of the country under the Area Redevelopment Act is eloquent testimony to this. Today, hundreds of workers without even the equivalent of an elementary school

education and with backgrounds of long periods of joblessness are being retrained for productive work again.

The second proposition is that everyone needs to be trained. When I state this I mean it in a completely unqualified way. Everyone from the person doing the simplest type of hand labor to the scientists doing the most intricate work in the laboratory needs to know much more than he now knows. I believe that every one of you can testify to the truth of this from his own experience. No doctor, for example, can be satisfied with the information he now has. No scientist can feel that he has answered all the questions in his area of specialization. No skilled workman can feel that he knows all there is to be known about his area of work. In addition, to each of us feeling an inadequacy in his own area, we all feel a need for a great deal more of education and information about dozens of other areas of knowledge which are necessary to our efficient functioning in both our vocations and as citizens of this great country.

The persons who need the training most of all, of course, are those for whom the Manpower Development and Training Act was designed. These are the persons who are unemployed because of a lack of basic education or a lack of a marketable skill. Among them are heavy concentrations of older workers, many of whom were simply unable to take advantage of the educational opportunities available when they were youngsters. Sheer economic necessity forced many of them to forego these opportunities in order that they could help support their families -- in many cases where the father was either dead or disabled and there were many mouths to feed.

I look at the passage of this Act as an opportunity to give many of these individuals a second chance. Indeed, we might say that society owes them this credit. Instead of staying in school some thirty or forty years ago, they became gainful workers, saving the taxpayers at that time millions of dollars. Now we are saying that, out of

consideration for what they gave up at that time and the changing technology of today, we are giving them another chance at education and training.

Proposition number three is that every place needs training. Certainly I can think of no place in Rhode Island that does not need to train its people in order that they can get better jobs, earn more money, and contribute more to the strength of their State and Nation. We are now coming to realize that economic development of a State or area is inextricably interwoven with training of the workforce. Industry is extremely mobile, and plants -- as we know here in our own State and region -- tend to move to places where there are the workers with the skills to operate the machines and the systems which automation and technological change are demanding more and more.

Having said these few words about the need for training, I should like, in my fourth proposition, to stress the fact that from now on out, all of our training must be of the highest quality. The reasons for this are fairly obvious in today's world, but permit me to stress two of the more important reasons for quality training. One is that the United States and its allies among the free nations are in competition with antagonists who, between them, have nearly a billion people. It is obvious that we, including our allies, are never going to catch the Iron Curtain countries in the number of workers. If we are to out-produce them and to meet their challenge in every aspect of American life, we obviously must do it with quality rather than quantity. Quality of our workers in turn is very obviously highly dependent on the quality of education and training they receive. In considering ways of improving the quality of our training, we must not be restricted by the teaching methods, curriculum and the ways we used in the past. We must take full advantage of the extremely important discoveries which have been made about the processes of learning, teaching, and training which have been made in the past twenty years.

Now, a final word. Over the past several years you have undoubtedly heard many learned discussions about the need for training versus the need for economic growth. To me, it is obvious that this country must have both. Certainly no one can deny that even in times of fairly high unemployment there are many jobs that go begging because of a lack of trained people to fill them. It is also true that training alone will not accomplish the results we desire. An adequate rate of economic growth will make it possible to much more readily place the workers that we train under the Manpower Development and Training Act. It seems to me, however, that rapid economic growth would actually create a still greater need for training. Rapid economic growth will certainly mean the introduction of new products, new methods, new markets, and new automatic equipment used in both production and service activities. Clearly, the United States in the future is going to have to pay more attention to every consideration due the education and training of its citizens. Our new Manpower Development and Training Act is a major step forward in this direction -- and we here in Rhode Island intend to make it serve the needs of our citizens to the maximum extent.

* * *