

Panel Discussion
REMARKS-5 min.
Cong. John E. Fogarty
Conference on Rehabilitation
University of Pennsylvania
Thursday, October 18, 1962

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND NEW HORIZONS
IN REHABILITATION

In recent years the goal of rehabilitation has changed from that of retraining the handicapped for a job -- any job -- to the goal of equal opportunity for all the handicapped to be trained to the extent of their abilities. The Federal Government is, I believe, exploring the future possibilities -- now -- and leading the way into whole new areas of rehabilitation.

I welcome this opportunity to join this Conference on Rehabilitation Concepts. The distinguished speakers who have joined the panel discussions here yesterday and today have represented all of those who are engaged in the rehabilitation effort -- the Federal, State and local groups, the voluntary groups, and individuals. The University of Pennsylvania has provided an opportunity for an expression of the various viewpoints represented here, and has done everything to serve as a gracious host.

The joint sponsorship of the Conference we are attending -- a State university and a large insurance company -- reminds us of the success American workers have had in taking down the barriers of prejudice which stood behind unrealistic physical standards for employment and is now causing a rewriting of the industrial insurance regulations and laws. I imagine that Mr. MacLean will touch on this aspect of the rehabilitation problem, later in this program.

Vocational rehabilitation has come a long way since World War I. During the past 40 years or so it has been tremendously successful in solving the problems of public awareness and support. It has been successful in gaining acceptance of workers and labor organizations. It has gained the cooperation of the legal profession and has gained the support of the medical profession. No better proof of the success of vocational rehabilitation in achieving wide acceptance can be provided than the names of the institutions of the participants at this conference.

But we are now going beyond the traditional problems which demanded the attention of the rehabilitation movement in its early days. As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare, I have had for many years the opportunity and privilege of hearing the plans and projects of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and of sharing in their successes or frustrations.

It is not too much to say that new horizons actually are opening up before us today, in rehabilitation. For the first time in history we are beginning to work with special disabled groups who were never helped before. This is an exciting prospect, and one that we accept but seldom pause to think about.

One of the most important and meaningful of these new horizons in rehabilitation is the extension of services to the mentally and emotionally crippled. The number of persons with these difficulties who have been rehabilitated is rising sharply. The number of retarded who were rehabilitated between 1955 and 1961 increased six-fold; the number of those with mental illness increased three-fold, during the same period.

As these developments have continued to manifest themselves, a number of activities have emerged and focused on the rehabilitation problem. In summarizing these activities, I shall use the pronoun we; and I shall use it in the literal sense, because these activities represent a joint effort involving the U. S. Congress -- instrument of the people -- agencies of the government -- including Federal, State, and local -- and various private research and educational institutions.

At the same time we have been extending our services to the very young and the very old. We are trying to reach the very young before they become delinquent, and great effort is being made to reach and train the handicapped child, so that he does not become an unproductive adult. We are trying to rehabilitate the very old, that they may lead useful, happier lives.

One of the brightest vistas of our expanding horizons in rehabilitation is the reaching out to help those who have always been regarded as "incurable" -- for the first time victims of cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, hemophilia, drug addiction and alcoholism are beginning -- it is only a beginning, yet -- to see a ray of light in their dark world of despair.

Another bright vista is the geographic front. On the home front we are beginning to do something for the handicapped in rural areas, by sending itinerant counselors and mobile diagnostic teams into sparsely settled areas. On the international front we are opening up new vistas of international cooperation through rehabilitation in a way that can only lead to greater international understanding in a healthier world.

The only shadow on the bright picture of expanding horizons is the lack of sufficient trained personnel to do all the tasks that are before us. We will rehabilitate 100,000 people this year, for the first time, but the number of those needing rehabilitation is increasing at such a rate that by 1970 more than 300,000 will join those ranks, each year. We must do all we can to increase the numbers of trained personnel we need in all the fields of rehabilitation. We must not fail to increase our efforts, or our new horizons will not be pushed back as they should, to a brighter, happier, more productive world.

#