

An address by Representative
John E. Fogarty at the Socio-
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ACCELERATING SERVICE TO THE RETARDED THROUGH LEGISLATION

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I am happy to be with you today at the conclusion of this unique Institute. I understand that it is the first ever to be held in the United States on socio-recreative programming for the retarded. Even if I had not been told that this was so, I might have suspected something of the sort, for both sponsoring organizations--the National Association for Retarded Children and Comeback, Inc.--have regularly pioneered in the areas of their special and mutual concern.

Earlier this morning you reported the results of your work group discussions on how plans for extending social and recreational programs might be implemented. My task, as I understand it, is to discuss "Accelerating Service to the Retarded Through Legislation".

This is a subject on which I am always happy to speak.

However, since my past record as an initiator and a supporter of legislation for the mentally ill and mentally retarded was thoroughly reviewed during the election campaign, I shall not discuss this today.

I am certain that you, like me, are more interested in what lies ahead.

After many years as a legislator, I have developed a healthy respect for what legislation can do. I have also learned what it cannot do.

You may have heard it said that "you cannot legislate social progress." This is only partially true. We cannot legislate poverty, or illness, or international or social tensions out of existence. We cannot, by legislation alone, build a road, a school, a hospital.

We cannot, through legislation alone, see to it that loved and needful children--who are also mentally retarded--are given the blessings of the best possible services our rich and well-intentioned society can provide.

But as a legislator I know that legislation--good legislation--can do much to seeing to it that each person in our country enjoys the benefits of our common wealth, knowledge and talents.

How can we get good legislation?

First, I think it is important to remind you that a legislative body, regardless of whether it is concerned with local, State, or Federal matters, functions as a giant radar screen. It watches for blips coming from the constituency it serves. These blips may signify a common need, a request or a demand that the need be met. Hopefully, the blips also indicate a willingness to pay the cost of meeting the need.

No legislator can initiate the appearance of these blips on the legislative radar screen. That is your job: to define your needs; to request and demand that these needs be met; to register your willingness to pay the cost of meeting these needs.

When this is done, the individual legislator and the legislative body will be able to translate the "blips" into sound legislation.

Even here, though, the legislator needs your help: to state the need at hearings; to give the legislator professional and technical advice; to support the legislator's attempts to gain acceptance for the proposed legislation if that legislation, in your view, merits such support.

Above all, a legislator needs to know that if sound legislation is passed, the public will not back away from the necessity of appropriating funds to implement it.

What can legislation do?

It can act as a lever or stimulus to continued public action. It can crystallize and define public policy concerning a public problem. It can provide for governmental mechanisms that will make good public action possible. It can appropriate funds to support various public programs and services.

Because good legislation can do all this, I am proud to be a legislator. But I am not too proud to say that, as a legislator vitally interested in the welfare of the mentally ill and mentally retarded, I have needed your help in the past, and will need it in the future.

All of us, at this moment, are engaged in a vast, extensive, and far-reaching process of public action in the field of mental retardation. We have been so engaged for a long time.

And from where I sit watching the blips on the radar screen, it looks as though this engagement will continue for a long time to come.

I am referring, of course, to the process touched off by the Report of the President's Panel on Mental Retardation, which was released last month.

I have committed myself to the task of implementing the recommendations of this Report as quickly as possible, regardless of cost.

No over-all price tags were mentioned in the Report. However, the first news reports concerning these recommendations implied they would cost \$30,000,000 in new Federal funds during the first year of implementation.

This sum is much too small. If Congress is requested to appropriate \$100,000,000 to implement the program in the next fiscal year, I shall consider this a reasonable--even modest--request.

Furthermore, I shall use my influence to assure that wherever new legislation is needed to carry out the recommendations, this legislation is introduced into Congress and becomes law.

For I know that the process of public action in this field must keep pace with the life process.

Time does not stand still for the mentally retarded while those who control his destiny quibble about costs around a committee table. The passage of time will make only more desperate the needs of the retarded that are not being met today. For it is now that the infant's parents need counseling. It is now that the toddler needs a careful diagnostic workup. It is now the child needs special education. It is now the adolescent needs job training. And it is now that the retarded adult needs recreational and social facilities.

For a long time, I have known that the needs of the mentally retarded were great and complex.

It does not surprise me, therefore, that it is going to be difficult and costly to put the proposed national program into action.

Let me run down, briefly, what the President's Panel has stated would be an adequate program in this field. To begin with, the Panel has emphasized the need of improving the health, educational and social services for all the youth in our land. These services, they point out, would not only directly benefit the mentally retarded but would also prevent the occurrence of much mental retardation.

In addition, the Panel has recognized the extraordinary needs of the mentally retarded, and has requested special services for the retarded: first, to develop each individual's maximum capacity, thus bringing him

as close to the main stream of "normalcy" as possible; and second, to provide care and accomodation for those disabilities which cannot be overcome.

In addition to these general recommendations, the main recommendations of the Panel are directed to seven more specific areas.

These are:

One--Research in the causes of retardation and in methods of care, rehabilitation, and learning.

Two--Preventive health measures, including a greatly strengthened program of maternal and infant care. This is to be directed, first, at the centers of population where prematurity and the rate of "damaged" children are high. In addition, the Panel calls for protection against such known hazards to pregnancy as radiation and harmful drugs; and stresses extended diagnostic and screening services.

Three--Strengthened educational programs generally, and extended and enriched programs of special education in public and private schools. These should be closely coordinated with vocational guidance, vocational rehabilitation, and specific training and preparation for employment; education for the adult mentally retarded, and workshops geared to his needs.

Four--More comprehensive and improved clinical and social services.

Five--Improved methods and facilities for care, with emphasis on the home and the development of a wide range of local community facilities.

Six--A new legal, as well as social, concept of the retarded, including protection of his civil rights, life guardianship provisions when needed, and an enlightened attitude on the part of the law and the courts.

Seven--Helping overcome the serious problems of manpower as they affect the entire field of science and every type of service, through

extended programs of recruiting with fellowships, and through increased opportunities for graduate students and those preparing for the professions to observe and learn at first hand about the phenomenon of retardation. Because there will never be a fully adequate supply of personnel in this field and for other cogent reasons, the Panel has emphasized the need for more volunteers in health, recreation and welfare activities, and for a Domestic Peace Corps to stimulate voluntary services.

Furthermore, in addition to placing a strong emphasis on research and prevention, the report recommends that programs for the retarded be comprehensive, that they be community centered, and that they offer a continuum of services to meet different types of need.

How are these recommendations to be implemented?

The Panel has emphasized that private agencies as well as local, State, and Federal public agencies must continue to provide and to increase resources for the mentally retarded. The Panel states, also, that while the Federal government can assist in implementing these recommendations, the principal responsibility for financing and improving services for the mentally retarded must continue to be borne by States and local communities.

However, since I am a Federal legislator, I want to go on record right now concerning what I feel are primarily Federal responsibilities.

One--The recommendations will make it necessary to train tens of thousands of additional persons to work with the mentally retarded. As an example of the manpower needs in this field, the report states that 55,000 more teachers skilled in working with exceptional children are needed.

It is my judgment, first, that the impact of the manpower and training needs in this field must be considered in relation to the total manpower and training needs of our country. Second, the Federal government has a major responsibility to support the training of sufficient numbers of personnel to meet all our personnel needs.

Two--The recommendations call for the establishment of new research centers and small residential treatment centers. I would go beyond the recommendations of this Report and say that we need comprehensive community centers to meet the needs of both the mentally retarded and the mentally ill. I consider it primarily a Federal responsibility to provide the construction funds needed to build these centers.

Three--The recommendations call for action to provide planned comprehensive community clinical, rehabilitation, and social services for the retarded, properly related to other community health and social services. I would underscore the phrase "properly related," since the needs of other groups, such as the mentally ill, cannot be lost sight of while we meet the needs of the mentally retarded.

And I consider it a Federal responsibility to help support the operation of these comprehensive programs.

I have avoided mention, up to now, of your particular interests--the areas of social and recreational programming.

This is not because either the President's Panel or I do not understand the importance of these particular services.

On the contrary--the whole tenor of the Panel's report, and both its implicit and explicit recommendations, show concern for, and awareness of, the particular area of mental retardation you have chosen as your special task.

The Report discusses the "State of the Nation" in such subject areas as community services, the role of the family, the role of religion in the life of the mentally retarded and their families. It discusses problems concerned with the education of the retarded and their vocational life. All of these areas bear in upon your problems.

In addition, the Report defines the need of the retarded child, adolescent and adult for healthy, growth-promoting recreational opportunities.

It points out that in many communities where organized recreational facilities are available, these facilities are seldom used by retarded persons. It calls for recreational programs modified to meet the specific physical and psychological needs of the retarded.

Furthermore, the Report specifically recommends that pilot studies of programs and resources for the recreation of the mentally retarded be designed and developed in selected communities. These are to lead to guidelines for community planning and action.

It urges that recommendations developed through such experiments should be implemented at State and community levels through the resources of the public and private agencies that have continuing program responsibilities. This, of course, includes you.

To summarize and conclude what I have said:

I have expressed my determination to see to it that the recommendations of the President's Panel on Mental Retardation are implemented, despite the cost, in as short a time as possible.

I have pledged that legislation needed to implement these recommendations is introduced in Congress and becomes law.

I have outlined what I consider to be the primary Federal responsibilities in the proposed program: support for training, for construction of needed facilities, and for the operation of comprehensive community programs. Such support would be in addition to already existing Federal programs and responsibilities.

Finally, I have indicated that you, with your deep interest in social and recreational programming, can and must play a significant part in implementing the proposed national program.

Services to the mentally retarded can and must be accelerated through legislation.

You have my pledge that I will devote myself wholeheartedly to this goal when I return to Washington.

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