

TALKING POINTS

ON NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED WEEK

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1983

- O I AM PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO SPEAK BEFORE THIS GROUP AT THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ON THE OCCASION OF NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED WEEK.
- O DURING THE PAST DECADE, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEMS OF DISABLED AMERICANS, AND MUCH PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TO ADDRESS THEIR SPECIAL NEEDS. OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH CARE AND REHABILITATION, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY LIVING HAVE INCREASED BUT STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO. LAWS HAVE BEEN ENACTED, BUT REMAIN TO BE ENFORCED.
- O DESPITE THIS PROGRESS, WHICH REPRESENTS A GREAT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE PREVALENT LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES OF PAST DECADES, STATISTICAL STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AMONG HANDICAPPED PEOPLE ARE DRASTICALLY HIGHER THAN RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR NONHANDICAPPED PEOPLE. ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF DISABLED AMERICANS WHO COULD WORK, IF GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY, ARE ACTUALLY EMPLOYED.
- THIS RECESSION HAS BEEN CRUEL TO MANY AMERICANS WHO NOW FIND THEMSELVES UNEMPLOYED AFTER HAVING WORKED ALL THEIR LIVES, BUT A GREAT TOLL HAS BEEN TAKEN ON THE HANDICAPPED AS WELL.

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-- UNEMPLOYED RATES AMONG DISABLED WORKERS ARE CURRENTLY ESTIMATED TO BE BETWEEN 50 TO 75 PERCENT, UP FROM A PRE-RECESSION RATE OF 45 PERCENT.

- o IT IS UNFORTUNATE TO DISCOVER, AS STUDIES INDICATES THAT ONLY IN A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF CASES IS INABILITY TO PERFORM A REGULAR FULL-TIME JOB THE REASON A HANDICAPPED PERSON IS NOT EMPLOYED. FREQUENTLY, EMPLOYER PREJUDICES EXCLUDE HANDICAPPED PERSONS FROM JOBS -- ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS CONTINUE TO AFFECT DISABLED AMERICANS IN JUST ABOUT EVERY PHASE OF THEIR UPHILL BATTLE TO JOIN THE MAINSTREAM OF COMMUNITY LIFE AND THE EMPLOYMENT WORLD. THIS KIND OF BATTLE IS PERHAPS THE ONE THAT IS MOST DIFFICULT TO WAGE. BIASES CAN OPERATE IN SUBTLE, OFTEN UNCONSCIOUS WAYS TO ELIMINATE CONSIDERATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE FROM THE JOBS APPLICATION, HIRING, AND EMPLOYMENT PROCESS.
- o TAX INCENTIVES HAVE HELPED TO ELIMINATE ARCHITECTURAL AND TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS, ALONG WITH THE IMPACT OF SECTION 504, BUT THE MOST DIFFICULT BARRIER REMAINS TO BE TRANSCENDED, ALTHOUGH MANY ARE WORKING TO CHIP AWAY AT ITS EFFECTS.
- o THE MAJORITY OF UNEMPLOYED HANDICAPPED PEOPLE, ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF TAKING THEIR PLACES IN THE JOB MARKET, IF GIVEN THE CHANCE, BUT MOST OFTEN, THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY ARE NOT OPEN TO THEM BECAUSE SOMEBODY ALONG THE WAY HAS MADE ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THEIR LACK OF ABILITY. WHAT IS PERHAPS MOST UNFAIR, IS

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THAT USUALLY THE DISABLED PERSON NEVER KNOWS WHY HE OR SHE
DIDN'T GET THE JOB.

- O IT HAS BEEN ONE OF MY GOALS IN POLITICAL LIFE TO HELP INCREASE
THE AWARENESS OF THE ABILITIES THAT HANDICAPPED PEOPLE POSSESS.
ALL TOO FREQUENTLY THEIR DISABILITIES ARE EMPHASIZED, AND WE
AS A SOCIETY LOSE, BECAUSE WE ARE IGNORING A VALUABLE HUMAN
RESOURCE WITHIN OUR OWN POPULATION ,
- O THERE ARE 36 MILLION HANDICAPPED PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES
TODAY, WITH VARYING DEGREES OF DISABILITY WHO REPRESENT THE
UNDERUTILIZATION OF A VAST HUMAN RESOURCE. MOST AMERICANS,
WHETHER DISABLED OR NONDISABLED, WANT ONLY TO BE ABLE TO SHARE
THEIR TALENTS WITH THE SOCIETY WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE
THEIR PERSONAL DREAMS COME TRUE. THEY WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AS
PRODUCTIVE, TAX-PAYING CITIZENS, TAKING PRIDE IN THEIR WORK.
IT IS TIME TO OPEN MORE DOORS.
- O NUMEROUS STUDIES INDICATE THAT HANDICAPPED WORKERS, WHEN ASSIGNED
APPROPRIATE POSITIONS, PERFORM AS WELL AS OR BETTER THAN, THEIR
NONHANDICAPPED FELLOW WORKERS. IN FACT, A U.S. CIVIL SERVICE
COMMISSION STUDY OF APPOINTMENTS OF SEVERELY HANDICAPPED WORKERS
TO FEDERAL AGENCY JOBS OVER A 10-YEAR PERIOD CONCLUDED THAT
"THE WORK RECORD IS EXCELLENT." THIS SHOULD TELL US SOMETHING
IMPORTANT.

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-- STILL, THOSE HANDICAPPED WORKERS WHO ARE ABLE TO FIND A JOB ARE TWICE AS LIKELY AS NONHANDICAPPED PERSONS TO WORK PART TIME, IN SPITE OF THAT FACT THAT MOST DISABLED INDIVIDUALS ARE ABLE TO WORK A FULL, STANDARD 8-HOUR WORKDAY AND A NORMAL 5-DAY WORK WEEK. ALONG WITH THIS HANDICAPPED EMPLOYEES ALSO TEND TO BE UNDERPAID. IT'S TIME TO START CHANGING THE STATISTICS OF INEQUITY SO THAT ALL AMERICANS WILL BE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM THE TALENTS AND ABILITIES OF OUR DISABLED CITIZENS.

- ONE OF THE GREATEST MILESTONES OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE AREA OF HANDICAPPED RIGHTS WAS ENACTED WITH TITLE V OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973, WHICH ESTABLISHES AS A NATIONAL POLICY CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTION FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE. SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE ACT AT THE TIME, SENATOR TAFT DECLARED:

TOO MANY HANDICAPPED AMERICANS ARE NOT SERVED AT ALL, TOO MANY LACK JOBS, AND TOO MANY ARE UNDEREMPLOYED -- UTILIZED IN CAPACITIES WELL BELOW THE LEVELS OF THEIR TRAINING, EDUCATION AND ABILITY ... IF WE ARE TO ASSURE THAT ALL HANDICAPPED PERSONS MAY PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE REWARDS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, WE MUST DEVOTE MORE OF OUR ENERGY TOWARD ELIMINATION OF THE MOST DISGRACEFUL BARRIER OF ALL -- DISCRIMINATION.

- SECTION 504 HAS GENERATED THE GREATEST NUMBER OF REGULATIONS, AS WELL AS THE MOST LITIGATION. ITS TERMS PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF HANDICAP IN ANY PROGRAM OR ACTIVITY RECEIVING FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE -- INCLUDING THE AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, HOUSING TRANSPORTATION, AND HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES. SECTION 504 REACHES THE DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THE REGULATIONS DEFINE DISCRIMINATION BROADLY TO INCLUDE PRACTICES

THAT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY DENY OPPORTUNITIES, AFFORD OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE UNEQUAL, LESS EFFECTIVE, OR REQUIRE DIFFERENT OR SEPARATE OPPORTUNITIES. IN FURTHERANCE OF 504 GOALS, RECIPIENTS OF FEDERAL FUNDS CANNOT USE CRITERIA OR METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION THAT HAVE THE EFFECT OF DISCRIMINATING AGAINST HANDICAPPED PERSONS, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY INTENDED TO DISCRIMINATE.

I UNDERSTAND THAT RIF POLICIES MAY BE OF SOME CONCERN. WHEN THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WAS PLANNING TO INITIATE REDUCTIONS IN FORCE, IT PROVIDED CERTAIN PROTECTIONS FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE BY URGING EMPLOYERS NOT TO CONDUCT RIF'S IN THE ACCEPTED SERVICE, WHICH IS THE CATEGORY INTO WHICH MOST DISABLED FEDERAL WORKERS BELONG. SHOULD DISABLED EMPLOYEES BECOME SUBJECT TO RIF'S, THERE IS SPECIAL PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THEM, AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS ARE TO BE PROVIDED IN THE RELOCATING OF DISABLED FEDERAL WORKERS WITHIN THE SAME AGENCY. RIF REGULATIONS CURRENTLY IN THE PROPOSED STAGE REQUIRE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION WITH RESPECT TO BUMPING AND RETREAT. THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT HAS ENCOURAGED EMPLOYERS TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE WITHIN THE SYSTEM TO LESSEN THE IMPACT OF RIF'S WHEN THEY AFFECT HANDICAPPED FEDERAL WORKERS.

ECONOMIC ISSUES AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT OF THE DISABLED

- o IT IS APPROPRIATE THIS AFTERNOON THAT WE SPEAK ABOUT A FAIRNESS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN OUR SOCIETY THAT PARTIALLY TRANSCENDS QUESTIONS OF ENFORCEMENT OF FAIR HOUSING LAWS. ELIMINATION OF SEX DISCRIMINATION, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DISABLED AMERICANS. THE TIME HAS COME TO PAY MORE THAN LIP SERVICE TO THE BIGGEST THREAT TO ECONOMIC JUSTICE THAT OUR NATION HAS EVER FACED: THE ENORMOUS BUDGET DEFICITS THAT CONFRONT US AS A NATION. WE HAVE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT BUDGET DEFICITS LATELY THAT WE MAY HAVE BECOME NUMB TO SOME EXTENT. IF IN FACT THE CONSTANT TALK ABOUT DEFICITS HAS ANESTHETIZED THE PUBLIC, I WOULD SUGGEST IT'S TIME WE ALL WOKE UP.
- o FOR MUCH OF THIS CENTURY, WE AMERICANS HAVE IGNORED THOMAS JEFFERSON'S WARNING AGAINST THE DANGERS OF PUBLIC DEBT. IN THE LAST TEN YEARS ALONE, WE HAVE PILED UP \$800 BILLION IN DEBT UPON THE SHOULDERS OF SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS. OUR NATIONAL DEBT AT THE END OF THIS FISCAL YEAR WILL BE SOMEWHERE AROUND \$1.3 TRILLION. BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF FY '88, CURRENT PROJECTIONS ARE THAT WE WILL PILE ANOTHER \$1.200 BILLION ONTO THAT MOUNTAIN. THE FIGURES ARE SO STAGGERING THAT IT IS IN A WAY NOT SURPRISING THAT MANY AMERICANS HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEFICITS AND THE NOTIONS OF FAIRNESS; AND THE EQUITY THAT WE ARE ALL CONCERNED WITH.

- O I THINK IT'S TIME WE STARTED TO UNDERSTAND THE EFFECT THIS WILL HAVE ON NEW GENERATIONS. AFTER 1988, THIS NEW DEBT ALONE WILL REQUIRE INTEREST PAYMENTS OF ABOUT \$100 BILLION A YEAR - ON TOP OF THE MORE THAN \$130 BILLION THAT WE'RE ALREADY SPENDING IN ANNUAL INTEREST PAYMENTS. THIS NEW DEBT ALONE WILL REQUIRE INTEREST PAYMENTS EQUALING SOME 20% OF ALL THE PERSONAL TAX REVENUE THAT WE CAN EXPECT TO COLLECT AFTER 1988.
- MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT: WE ARE HEADING TO THE POINT THAT WE WILL NEED NEW TAX INCREASES EVERY YEAR JUST SO WE CAN SERVICE THE DEBT. AND AS A LARGER PORTION OF OUR RESOURCES ARE CONSUMED BY INTEREST PAYMENTS, THE CORRESPONDING DECLINE IN SERVICES THAT AMERICANS WILL HAVE TO ACCEPT IT UNAVOIDABLE, WHETHER IN THE DEFENSE OF OUR SHORES OR THE REBUILDING OF OUR CITIES, OR THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF A WIDE RANGE OF PROGRAMS, INCLUDING THOSE AFFECTING THE DISABLED.
- O WHILE I CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO STRAY TOO FAR FROM THE EFFORTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE - AND WILL HAVE TO BE MADE - IN COMBATING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICE IN OUR COUNTRY, IT IS TIME FOR PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN AND FOR PEOPLE ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO ASK WHETHER IT IS FAIR TO LEAVE AN ABSOLUTELY UNMANAGEABLE FEDERAL DEBT TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN. WE HAVE TO QUESTION WHETHER WE ARE TRULY BEING COMPASSIONATE WHEN WE AUTHORIZE NEW FEDERAL SPENDING, EVEN FOR WELL INTENTIONED

PROGRAMS. I SUGGEST THAT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT FAIRNESS AND COMPASSION, WE MUST KEEP OUR EYE ON FUTURE GENERATIONS OF AMERICANS THAT WILL INHERIT THIS SEA OF RED INK.

IN THE COMING MONTHS, THE CONGRESS WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT IT IS A SERIOUS DELIBERATIVE BODY. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT IF WE CAN'T MOBILIZE OURSELVES TO DEAL WITH THE MOST SERIOUS DOMESTIC CONCERN FACING THE NATION, WE DON'T DESERVE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

- o IT IS TIME FOR ALL OUR LEADERS - FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS TO STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS, AND CERTAINLY TO MANY LEADERS IN THIS ROOM, TO PULL TOGETHER TO DEMAND THAT THE BUDGET DEFICIT BE ADDRESSED IN A SERIOUS WAY. WE CANNOT TAX OUR WAY OUT OF THE DEFICIT CRISIS, AND WE CANNOT DECIMATE THE SOCIAL AND BENEFIT PROGRAMS THAT SO MANY AMERICANS DEPEND UPON. WE MUST MAKE ADJUSTMENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LEDGER.