

PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON
EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MAY 4, 1990
WASHINGTON HILTON
WASHINGTON, D.C.

IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE TO ADDRESS THIS DISTINGUISHED GROUP ESPECIALLY AS CONGRESS MOVES TOWARD FINAL PASSAGE OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT.

SINCE ITS INCEPTION DURING THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION, THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE HAS PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES PROMOTING THE INDEPENDENCE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

A RECENT EXAMPLE, AT YOUR MAY, 1988 MEETING, A NATIONAL FORUM ON SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PRODUCED A REPORT WHICH NOT ONLY IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES BUT RECOMMENDED WAYS TO OVERCOME THOSE BARRIERS.

THIS TYPE OF LEADERSHIP PROVIDED BY HAROLD RUSSELL FOR 43 YEARS HAS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED THE CREDIBILITY OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE. NOW WE ARE ENTERING A NEW ERA UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF JUSTIN DART AND I AM CONFIDENT HE WILL MAINTAIN THE HIGH STANDARDS THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE HAS WORKED SO HARD TO ESTABLISH.

JAY ROCHLIN, ANOTHER TIRELESS ADVOCATE, HAS SERVED WITH REAL DISTINCTION -- HIS EFFORTS HAVE RESULTED IN VALUABLE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE AND INDUSTRY.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN BE FULL AND PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF THIS SOCIETY; THEY HAVE EARNED THEIR PLACE IN THE MAINSTREAM, AND THEY DESERVE THE FULL PROTECTION OF THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S SUPPORT FOR THIS COMMITTEE, AND THE ADA,

ENSURES THAT WE HAVE ENTERED A NEW ERA OF FULL CITIZENSHIP -- NO LONGER SECOND CLASS CITIZENSHIP -- BUT FULL CITIZENSHIP FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES -- NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

THE CONGRESSIONAL BIPARTISAN EFFORT WHICH PRODUCED THE ADA SHOULD SERVE AS A MODEL FOR OUR FRIENDS ON THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL IF THE ADA IS TO BE EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED.

AS YOU KNOW, THAT WORK IS JUST BEGINNING. THE PASSAGE OF ADA WILL NOT CHANGE ATTITUDES OR GENERATIONS OF PREJUDICE ABOUT THE LIMITS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. THERE IS MUCH MORE WORK TO BE DONE TO CONVINCING AMERICA THAT DISABLED DOESN'T MEAN UN-ABLE.

THAT'S WHY LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS MUST BE FORMED BETWEEN THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY; IT IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS I ESTABLISHED THE DOLE FOUNDATION. I HAVE LONG BELIEVED THAT EMPLOYMENT IS THE KEY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND EQUAL RIGHTS IN THE COMMUNITY. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PAUL HEARNE, THIS FOUNDATION SUPPORTS PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. BUSINESSES, LARGE AND SMALL, NEED TO FULLY REALIZE THE POTENTIAL OF QUALIFIED DISABLED PEOPLE. IT IS MY HOPE THAT PASSAGE OF THE ADA WILL HELP THAT POTENTIAL FLOWER AND FLOURISH ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

GIVEN THE COMPREHENSIVE NATURE OF THE ADA, IT SHOULD BE OUR OBLIGATION TO SEE THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES UNDERSTAND THEIR NEW RIGHTS AND THAT EMPLOYERS AND BUSINESSES UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS.

THAT IS WHY I INSISTED ON INCLUDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE LAW, AND WHY I RECENTLY REQUESTED A \$1.8 MILLION FEDERAL APPROPRIATION TO HELP THE RESPONSIBLE FEDERAL AGENCIES -- INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE -- TO ESTABLISH A STRONG GOVERNMENT-WIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

MANY OF YOU ALREADY PROVIDE THE TYPE OF ASSISTANCE WE NEED.

BUT, WE WILL NEED TO RELY ON YOUR EXPERTISE AS WELL AS FEDERAL DOLLARS AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS IF THE PROMISE OF THE ADA IS TO BE FULFILLED.

I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU THAT MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION TO THE ADA HAS BEEN BASED ON MISINFORMATION AND UNFOUNDED FEARS. THE TIME TO CORRECT THAT MISINFORMATION AND CALM THOSE FEARS IS NOW.

THE JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK IS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE AND MODEL FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. WE NEED TO MAKE MORE EMPLOYERS AWARE OF THESE KINDS OF RESOURCES.

IN FORGING NEW PARTNERSHIPS, WE IN THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY NEED TO KEEP IN MIND THAT SMALL BUSINESSES CREATE THREE OUT OF FIVE NEW JOBS. WE MUST REACH OUT TO THE OWNERS OF SMALL BUSINESSES AND INFORM THEM OF THE KINDS OF RESOURCES THAT ARE AVAILABLE.

I BELIEVE THAT THE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES WHICH ENABLE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN THE WORKPLACE WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

DISABILITIES ARE NOT INTRINSIC TO THE PERSON. THEY ARE OFTEN THE RESULT OF A INACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT.

WE MUST REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT NEEDED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEVICES ARE UNIVERSALLY AVAILABLE AND AFFORDABLE. THE WORKPLACE OF THE 90'S WILL BE DIFFERENT TO ALL OF US - NEW TECHNOLOGY WILL FOREVER CHANGE THE WORKPLACE, AND THUS OPEN LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKFORCE REGARDLESS OF MOBILITY, VISUAL, HEARING, OR PERCEPTUAL LIMITATIONS.

THE SECRETARY OF LABOR TELLS ME THAT MANY BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES ARE NOW FACING A LABOR SHORTAGE -- THAT OUR WORKFORCE IS GROWING AT A RATE OF ONLY 1% ANNUALLY -- THE SLOWEST RATE IN 40 YEARS. SHE BELIEVES THAT THIS JOB GAP GIVES US A DRAMATIC OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO HELP EMPLOYERS SOLVE THEIR LABOR SHORTAGE PROBLEMS.

ONCE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE ON THE JOB, DOING GOOD WORK, MAKING A SOLID CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPANY AND THE COMMUNITY, THEN YOU WILL SEE BARRIERS AND MISCONCEPTIONS FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE.

I WILL CONTINUE TO ACTIVELY PROMOTE THE INTEREST OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WITH MY SUPPORT FOR THESE IMPORTANT PIECES OF LEGISLATION:

- o REAUTHORIZATION OF THE EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED ACT
- o THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ACT
- o THE JTPA AMENDMENTS
- o THE REHABILITATION ACT
- o AND A SOUND COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAM TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENT LIVING

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER. WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO. BUT I AM ENCOURAGED BY THE TREMENDOUS GAINS WE HAVE MADE. LET'S KEEP IT UP.

AS PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT ONCE SAID: "THE BEST PRIZE LIFE HAS TO OFFER IS THE CHANCE TO WORK HARD AT WORK WORTH DOING."

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