

SPEECH FOR  
INDUSTRY-LABOR CONFERENCE  
SEPTEMBER 30, 1987

I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE AND TO BE A PART OF  
THIS INDUSTRY-LABOR CONFERENCE ON AN ISSUE THAT IS  
IMPORTANT TO ME AND TO EVERYONE IN THIS COUNTRY -  
THE EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED INDIVIDUALS.

IN 1973 THIS COUNTRY CHANGED ITS DIRECTION IN  
HOW IT RELATED TO DISABLED PERSONS. WITH THE  
PASSAGE AND SIGNING OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, WE  
AS A NATION CHALLENGED OURSELVES TO CREATE AN  
ENVIRONMENT THAT ALLOWED DISABLED INDIVIDUALS INTO  
THE MAINSTREAM OF SOCIETY.

KEY TO FULL PARTICIPATION FOR DISABLED

INDIVIDUALS AND FOR ALL OF US IS THE OPPORTUNITY

TO WORK. AT THE TIME 70 PERCENT OF DISABLED

INDIVIDUALS IN THIS COUNTRY, WHO WERE BETWEEN THE

AGES OF 16 AND 64 AND CAPABLE OF WORKING, WERE

UNEMPLOYED. THIS WAS A RATE MORE THAN TEN TIMES

THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

SINCE THEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS  
INSTITUTED REGULATIONS PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION  
AGAINST AN INDIVIDUAL MERELY BECAUSE HE OR SHE IS  
DISABLED. WE HAVE SUPPORTED PROGRAMS TO HELP  
DISABLED INDIVIDUALS RECEIVE VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE,  
TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE WITH PLACEMENT. WE HAVE  
PASSED TAX DEDUCTIONS AND CREDITS TO ENCOURAGE  
BUSINESSES TO HIRE DISABLED INDIVIDUALS. THROUGH  
THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE

HANDICAPPED, WE HAVE MOUNTED A SIGNIFICANT  
PUBLICITY DRIVE TO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS INCLUDING  
OURSELVES TO HIRE DISABLED PERSONS. AND WE ARE  
REVIEWING OUR DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS SUCH AS  
SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME TO REMOVE  
DISINCENTIVES TO WORK.

IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR MANY CORPORATIONS LIKE  
YOUR OWN EITHER IN RESPONSE TO THESE FEDERAL  
INITIATIVES OR BECAUSE YOU REALIZE IT IS GOOD  
BUSINESS, ARE GIVING DISABLED PERSONS AN EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY TO COMPETE AND SUCCEED IN POSITIONS IN  
YOUR COMPANIES. YOU PROBABLY HAVE ALSO DISCOVERED  
THE SAVINGS THAT CAN BE REALIZED IN DISABILITY  
RETIREMENT OR WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION PAYMENTS WHEN  
MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO RETURN DISABLED EMPLOYEES TO  
WORK.

YET DESPITE ALL THAT HAS BEEN DONE BY BOTH THE  
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, A 1986 HARRIS POLL  
DISCOVERED THAT NEARLY 67 PERCENT OF DISABLED  
AMERICANS, BETWEEN THE AGES 16 AND 64, ARE NOT  
WORKING. WHAT MAKES THIS STATISTIC EVEN MORE  
TELLING IS THAT 66 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE POLLED IN  
THAT SURVEY SAID THEY WANTED TO WORK. IT SEEMS

THAT WE HAVE A LARGE STILL UNTAPPED RESOURCE AND I  
DON'T THINK WE, AS A SOCIETY, CAN ALLOW IT TO GO  
UNUTILIZED.

I AM NOT SURE WHAT THE SOLUTIONS ARE. BUT I  
AM DEDICATED TO WORKING WITH ALL OF YOU WHO ARE  
EQUALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROBLEM IN FINDING  
THOSE SOLUTIONS. I SHARE YOUR HOPE THAT WE WILL



HAVE "FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED INDIVIDUALS IN  
THE 1990'S" AND COMMIT MYSELF TO DOING EVERYTHING  
I CAN TO HELP MEET THAT GOAL.