

MEMORANDUM TO SENATOR DOLE

DA: April 1, 1995

FR: Alec Vachon

RE: UPDATE/"HOT BUTTON" DISABILITY ISSUES IN GREAT BRITAIN

RE YOUR MEETING ON MONDAY WITH PRIME MINISTER MAJOR:

BRITISH ADA BILL PASSES THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

- * On Wednesday, March 29th, the Major Government sent its ADA bill to the House of Lords after winning narrowly some tough votes. As I have written you, passing an ADA bill has been a big controversy in Britain since last May -- when the Minister for Social Security, Nick Scott, was accused of lying to Commons over behind-the-scenes maneuvers to block an ADA bill from coming to a vote. He was forced to resign in August. The Government then promised to introduce an ADA bill in Fall 1994. According to press reports, there have been mass demonstrations at Parliament by disability advocates over the past few months.
- * The bill bans discrimination in employment and private accommodations; creates a National Disability Council; and increases accessibility to buses and trains. Among the most controversial issues: coverage people w/mental disabilities and HIV in the employment, and transportation provisions.
- * As you may recall, last July five Members of Parliament met with me to talk about ADA. In September 1994, I met with the new British Minister of Social Security, William Hague (35-year old wunderkin who was a favorite of Margaret Thatcher), to discuss ADA as well. Most recently,

MAJOR GOVERNMENT TO DROP 325,000 PERSONS OFF DISABILITY ROLLS

- * On April 13th, the Major Government will implement (1) new eligibility criteria for disability benefits--which are expected to cut 325,000 off the rolls--and (2) lower the benefit amount. To get/keep benefits, people will have to pass a strict functional limitations test (unless terminally ill or very severely disabled)--and no longer will age, education, or work skills be counted. The key change is to eliminate an individual's doctor as the chief source of information--and use more objective tests.
- * Over the past 10 years, long-term disability rolls have doubled from 740,000 to 1.6 million persons --mostly because (like the U.S.) people are coming on the rolls at younger ages and staying on the rolls. This shake-up is expected to save almost \$2 billion each year--and is the biggest-ever welfare cut in Britain.

* The Brits are mindful that these changes could backfire--and
have apparently worked out a plan to make sure that every
person who is to be dropped gets a detailed letter
explaining the reasons.