

Minnesota Constitutional Study Commission Hearing, June 21, 1972
Testimony by Robert Lovering
Director of Social Services
United Cerebral Palsy, Minneapolis

I am a citizen and I am a taxpayer. Yet as both a citizen and taxpayer I am denied certain rights because of thoughtless construction. These rights are not denied by law; they are not denied by word; they are not denied by physical restraint. They are denied by beautiful, insidious designing. This insidious designing and construction has a name, "ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS." The song they sing is, "God loves you; we love you, but STAY OUT." We want to change the "stay out" to "welcome".

My tax money (and yours) is used to construct buildings I cannot enter and support transportation systems I cannot use. Close to the heart of every legislator is the voter. Architectural Barriers have made it impossible for most handicapped persons to vote as normal citizens. Absentee ballot procedures are enough to discourage anyone with physical or intellectual limitations.

Architectural Barriers deprive the handicapped person of rights others take freely for granted. These slides can show you the problems but you will never know the frequency of frustration in the lives of thousands of handicapped in our state.

1. Just a simple phone call -- impossible!
2. A drink -- no way!
3. Personal relief -- did you ever have one of those night mares in which you had to go but couldn't find a place? This is not a night mare for the handicapped--it's reality. Approximately three in one hundred restrooms are accessible to wheelchair users.
4. Crossing a street -- never alone!
5. Entering a building -- library, church, courthouse, state capitol, school--everywhere STEPS. RAMPS are the answer to this problem of handicapped and aged. The Safety Council credits Steps as a #1 hazard.
6. Parking -- unable to use parking ramps and lots because there is not room for the wheelchair between cars.
7. Shopping -- aisles many times too narrow

8. Eating in a restaurant -- the embarrassment of making everyone move
9. Taking a bus -- these people are waiting for a bus that will pass them by. It cannot pick them up because they cannot board.

These are but a few instances. As society, we have added INSULT to INJURY.

Have you any idea what these things do to one's ego?

Millions of dollars are spent annually for rehabilitation, only we discover that the rehabilitated person re-entering the world finds subtle hostility -- not an attitude, but physical barriers.