

Address by John L. Hahan, Retiring President
Minnesota Association for Retarded Children
to the 1962 Convention

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My Dear Friends,

Tonight, after two years as your president, and after having served the retarded parents movement since 1948 I address you as an elected officer, for the last time.

Whereas I do not intend to withdraw from this work, I do not want to accept any more elected positions. I feel that the movement, which was started by a handful of us many years ago, is in good hands. The Modus Operandi, which we established, is workable. Time, and our growth has shown that. We intended, from the very beginning, that the ARC groups should be community facilities serving the community, parents, and all retarded persons. We intended that our operations be completely open to the public. Our code of ethics were patterned to comply with The Basic Standards of Philanthropy as defined by The National Information Bureau. We have always sought the advice of our professional friends, and have steadfastly refrained from presuming to tell them how to conduct their affairs. We have scrupulously avoided opportunities and temptations to be a party to any sensationalism in the fields of public relations and publicity. We have been careful in hiring people to staff our offices. We try to pay decent salaries, and provide the benefits which are generally furnished by the more progressive employers. We have been willing to accept the fact that as we changed from a parent-volunteer organization to what we are today, we have turned over some of our responsibilities to our staff employees. We have been blessed with staff people whose dedication to our cause is the equal of our own. We are getting much more done that would ever be possible without them. We have avoided the greatest of all booby traps, becoming totally involved with direct service facilities which would exhaust our finances and consume our human resources. Instead we have directed our efforts towards inducing society and existing public agencies to provide the care our retarded people require. I think we have also learned the meaning of charity, and my prayer is that we never forget its meaning.

Thus we count our blessings. And if I, at this moment wax mellow at our accomplishments, I do so only because I am flooded with gratitude as I consider the many days, weeks, months, and years of effort and sacrifice which so many of you have put into this movement.

The main intent of my talk this evening is to prepare you for the future. I want to do this because I feel the years immediately ahead of us are going to be trying ones.

If we start now, in 1962, and proceed backwards into history, we would find that science and religion have been the great positive forces working to benefit the retarded. Working against the retarded have been a dismal collection of human frailties which I shall classify into three broad categories. Into the first I lump together the elements of ignorance, namely, socery and superstition. Into the second I place the special contribution of a few so-called educated people namely, pseudo science, with such highly developed artifices as unproven theories, shallow speculation. Into the third we collect all the

practices employed by those who, for their own interests, take advantage of the mentally retarded and the warm hearted people who try to help them. I suppose I also ought to mention the most common negative of all....plain indifference.

Twenty six hundred years ago, a deformed, mishappened child was born to a couple living in the Greek city-state of Sparta. We can imagine that within the limits of their stern, unnatural culture, the couple was as disturbed by the birth of this defective child as are the parents of today. We can well imagine that these Spartans wondered why their Gods visited such a child upon them.

In due time, the couple showed their child to the officials, as required by law.¹ There was no place in the Spartan scheme of things for weak, unhealthy, or deformed human beings, so the couple was given the choice of throwing their baby into the river Eurotas or taking him up to the top of a barren mountain and abandoning him there. Perhaps the couple chose this latter alternative. And as they turned their backs on their baby they could reason that now he was in the hands of the Gods. What more could one ask for than that?

In the twentieth century we still find examples of this Spartan Policy of destroying defective people. Today the practice has the rather polite name of euthanasia. Hitler and the Nazi state of Germany were enthusiastic practioners of euthanasia, and did away with some two hundred and fifty thousand retarded, senile, and mentally ill people.²

From the time of Sparta until around 1800, society's record towards meeting the needs of the retarded was one of the most pathetic chapters in the history of man.³ The early history of this dismal period is obscured by the lack of discrimination between physical deformities and mental incapacity. There was no clear cut distinction between epileptics, psychotics, deaf mutes, retarded, and so on. Indeed, in the almost complete absence of what we call a mental health program, attention was paid only to those so badly deformed or mentally handicapped that they could hardly escape the notice of the townspeople. The treatment given to these unfortunate people was not uniform and subject to local caprice. The laws of Rome provided for killing the malformed and the weakly, but such people were tolerated, and not too many Romans elected to make use of the law. In some localities, the retarded were regarded as sacred and received homage and reverence. In Brazil they were kindly treated. The American Indian looked upon them as "Children of The Great Spirit." In other localities, various sects regarded the retarded as possessed by Satan, and subjected them to cruel indignities in the hope of exorcising the devil. During the middle ages, the retarded were in demand as fools and jesters, and were employed for the laughs which they could provide. The whole era, before 1800 was indeed an era of socery and superstition.⁴⁵ During this era, only the religions of the world, especially Christianity, provided a bright spot.

There is one incident in the Bible which particularly illustrates the attitude of Jesus towards the Handicapped. I quote from the Gospel of St. John, chapter 9, verses 1 thru 4.

"And as he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth, and his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who has sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but the

works of God were to be made manifest in him. I must do the work of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, and no one can work."

Notice two things about this passage. Jesus literally declared that the works of creation could be understood by observing the handicapped. We'll come back to this point in a moment. Notice also that Jesus inferred that caring for the handicapped was urgent business because it was God's work.

As shown by this, and many other passages in the New Testament, Jesus became the great spokesman for the Charity demanded of the Jews by the Lord God of Israel. To this He added his own example, His own Teachings, and His own compassion for all who were handicapped and troubled. More than that, He advocated that The Fatherhood of God and The Brotherhood of man be taught to everyone. As he prepared to ascend into Heaven, His last instruction to his disciples was:

"Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

So it was, therefore, that as Christianity spread so also was spread the doctrine of charity. Thus it was the churches that provided what little care there was for the retarded prior to 1800. In the fourth century we read of the Bishop of Myra (The St. Nicholas of our Christmas time) who showed great concern for the retarded. From the thirteenth century on, the churches of Europe, in the name of Jesus, began rather systematically to provide asylums for the less fortunate members of society, including the intellectually handicapped. No attempt was made at treatment or education. These asylums were intended solely to provide a sanctuary for those unable to survive in a cruel and competitive society.³ In the sixteenth century, St. Vincent De Paul and his Sisters of Charity established the forerunners of today's hospitals and asylums with his famous facilities in the Becetre section of Paris. He gave emphasis to the teachings of Christ as to the duty of mankind towards the weak and the helpless by proclaiming that these people had the right to insist on getting what was required for their needs.

With the dawn of the seventeenth century, the first attempt was made to educate a retarded person.

In 1798, a party of sportsmen, hunting in the forest near Aveyron France, came upon a small boy of about twelve, roaming naked thru the woods like any other wild animal, feeding on nuts. The hunters gave chase and captured the lad. The boy was wild, unlearned, and unnatural in all his responses. He was brought to Paris and intrusted to the care of Dr. Jean Itard, chief medical officer of the National Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Itard had received much of his training at the Bicetre, the institution founded by St. Vincent. Dr. Pinel, Itard's superior felt that the boy was an idiot and incurable. Itard took the position that the boy was merely wild, and untaught. For four years, Itard labored mightily with the boy, was able to make some progress with him, but in the end, gave him up as being mentally incapable of normalcy. Itard's teaching methods, and his descriptions of the boy were classics, and represented the first truly objective approach ever taken to instructing the retarded and accurately describing the psychological nature of the phenomena.

The work of Itard was carefully studied by Edouard Sequin, a physician and psychologist, who was the first great teacher and leader in the field of mental deficiency. Sequin was a devout christian, and carried out his work full of idealism and love of humanity. After studying Itard's work, Sequin believed he had found the secret of treatment and cure. In 1837, in Paris, he founded the first successful school for educating the low level retarded. He published his great work "The Moral Treatment, Hygiene, and Education of Idiots and other Backward Children" in 1846. He was acclaimed by the French Academy of Science and commended by Pope Pius IX.¹⁰ One of Sequin's teachers, the world famous psychiatrist Esquirol complimented Sequin by saying that he had removed the mark of the beast from the forehead of the idiot.

Note that in those days the term idiot was not a derogatory one. It was derived from a Greek word referring to a person who did not take part in public life.

The works of Sequin were widely circulated, and had profound effects in England, the U.S., and Western Europe. The training and care of these individuals was considered an eminently suitable object for charity. In 1840, the English philanthropist Andrew Reed founded the first institution in England for the retarded. "The Divine Image is stamped upon us all," said Reed. "The principle which rules is charity...divine charity." The institution was so great a success that expansion was soon found necessary. In 1849 the English government built Essex Hall at Colchester and in 1855, a "model asylum" at Earlswood, Surrey.

In the U.S. similar moves began. In 1848, Dr. Wilbur opened the first private school in Barre, Mass. after having visited Sequin's school in Paris. The states of Massachusetts and New York became interested, and in 1851, in Albany, New York, a state school was opened with Dr. Harvey as the superintendent. Dr. Sequin was present at the laying of the cornerstone. The occasion was a moving one for him, and in his remarks he said-

"God has scattered amongst us--rare as the possessors of genius--the idiot, the blind, the deaf mute, in order to bind the rich to the needy, the talented to the incapable, all men to each other by a tie of indissoluble solidarity. The old bonds are dissolving; man is already unwilling to contribute money or palaces for the indolent nobility; but he is every day more ready to build palaces and give annuities for the indigent and the infirm, the chosen friends of our Lord Jesus. See that cornerstone...the token of a new alliance between humanity and a class hitherto neglected. That, Ladies and Gentlemen, is your pride; it is the greatest joy of my life; for I too have labored for the poor idiot."

So it went, in state after state. By 1900 there were fourteen states with separate institutions for the retarded. Today, the number is over one hundred.

These early institutions for the retarded were built in the spirit of love and charity, and with the definite idea of teaching the retarded. The writings of Itard, Sequin, and others were as modern and as far seeing as anything that is advocated today.

Meanwhile, another great trend was developing.

Whereas the early Greek Philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle, practiced science mainly as an exercise in logic, the Renaissance scientists like Leonardo da Vinci, and Galileo evolved the scientific method which has been so universally used ever since. Since the retarded have benefitted, and will benefit so much by the scientific method, I'll digress for a moment to briefly describe what the scientific method is. I also want to do this to emphasize that mere theories are not proven facts. As you shall see shortly, when psuedo science, in the guise of unproven theories came to bear on the problems of mental retardation, during the period from 1900 to 1930 as much harm as good resulted. Even today we are still plagued by a variety of people who offer theories but few facts about the retarded. Briefly, this is how the scientific method operates:

1. Observation: The scientist carefully observes many things.
2. Classification: The scientist arranges the facts into orderly groups which seem to fit together.
3. Hypothesis: The scientist tries to come up with an idea or a theory which fits the facts and explains them. The theory then becomes a possible solution which seems likely to be true.
4. Experimentation: The scientist then tests out the theory in many ways, under many conditions, to see whether it truly does fit all the facts and explains them. In short, h validates the theory of hypothesis thru experimentation.
5. Law: If the careful experiments demonstrate that the theory is true under all conditions, it is considered to be a scientific law or fact and is generally accepted by scientists everywhere.

The first real scientific breakthru on mental retardation came when scientists, thru observation, accepted the idea that the retarded belonged to the human race, and were natural, inevitable variants of the human specie. Before this rather obvious fact was pointed out, and because of medicine's inability to explain the condition, people had resorted to speculation and superstition.

Now recall the statement of Jesus that the man was born blind so that the works of God might be made manifest. Jesus literally told us to observe people, and to study them, especially the handicapped who are really the most different, if we want to know the laws of creation. In 1846 a Belgian astronomer Quetelet studies the physical measurements of men, and came up with calculations to describe the nature of the variability. In 1869, after twenty years of studying the differences in people, especially differences in ability and intelligence, Sir Francis Galton began to publish the first of many scientific articles dealing with the subject. He developed the science of statistics, came up with the oft quoted "Bell-shaped" distribution, theorized that the numbers of the brilliants and the dull ought to be about equal and that most other people would fall in between these two variants. He was the first person to suggest measuring human intelligence, and indeed, used a system of his own for estimating intelligence. He was the first to suggest identifying people by the use of finger prints. His own I.Q., incidentally, has been estimated to be about 200.⁶ He was also the father of the science of Eugenics and coined the word which means "well-born."⁷

Thus it was that the dawn of the twentieth century witnessed a promising beginning of organized scientific work in behalf of the retarded, saw the development of a sound educational program, dissipated the belief that mental retardation could be cured, marked the establishment of state institutions, and secured recognition of social responsibility towards the retarded.

With such an auspicious beginning, it is regretful that history records a rather dismal performance during the first 30 years of the twentieth century. This was brought about by the misapplication of two perfectly valid scientific discoveries....the measurement of intelligence, and the Mendelian laws of heredity.

Around the turn of the century a French medical student by the name of Alfred Binet and a French doctor by the name of Dr. Theodore Simon joined their talents to devise an accurate way of classifying retarded children. Their system was called "a measuring scale of intelligence," and worked by giving a child a series of tests which were progressively harder. A normal 10-year old child, for example, was expected to pass the test for a 10-year old. If a child 10 years old could only pass the test for a 5-year old, he was said to have a mental age of 5 years. Thus, the concept of mental age was introduced. The Binet-Simon tests were introduced in America by Dr. Goddard, director of the Vineland School for Retarded in New Jersey in 1908. Dr. Goddard, Dr. Fernald, and Dr. Kuhlman of Minnesota pioneered in the use of the Tests. Dr. Terman of Stanford University revised the tests and introduced the concept of Intelligence Quotient, the so-called I.Q. which is mental age divided by chronological age times 100. thus a child with a mental age of 8, and a chronological age of 10 has an I.Q. of $8/10 \times 100$ or 80. Dr. Terman also came up with a classification system based on I.Q. It ran as follows:

140 and above	Genius or near genius
120-140	Very superior intelligence
110-120	Superior intelligence
90-110	Normal and average intelligence
80-90	Dullness
70-80	Borderline deficiency
below 70	Definitely feeble-minded

The term moron was also coined for those who were feeble-minded but with an I.Q. around 70.

Such were the beginnings. The tests were first run in the institutions, and then were extended to school children. This was the start of the testing programs which have continued unabated ever since. Today they have reached the point where a high school graduate is the most tested person in the history of the world. The misapplication of testing results, which are very commonplace today, started almost as soon as the tests themselves were given. The world at large and the U.S. in particular was suddenly faced with a menace, namely the moron. Whereas previously, the moron had lived for centuries without notice, now the tests suddenly uncovered him. And whereas programs for the retarded had previously been geared to those who were very clearly recognized as being

retarded, namely the low grade retarded, now the Universal query became "What shall we do with the morons?"¹¹

While all this was going on, another, much more alarming situation was developing. The Mendelian laws of heredity were first worked out by the Austrian Monk Gregor Mendel on garden peas. His work was published in 1865, and lay unnoticed until around 1900 when Galton published a paper entitled "The possible improvement of the Human Breed." The very title of Galton's paper fired the imagination of people and speculation on the subject became a favorite matter for discussion. It wasn't long before Mendel's work on garden peas was being applied as the theory to explain the transmission of human characteristics, including mental retardation. Since experimentation on people is extremely difficult and would have to extend over many generations and many lifetimes to prove anything, the pseudo scientists looked for a short cut and began to examine family trees. Some of history's worse examples of scientific research resulted with the publication of the many papers exposing the family trees of many socially unacceptable families. The most famous ones was the paper of Dugdale on "The Jukes" family, and that of Goddard on the "Kallikak" family. These studies, which today are totally rejected, demonstrated to the rather complete satisfaction of the authors that a large proportion of mental retardation was hereditary in nature and transmitted according to the Mendelian laws. Still other studies, of about the same level of technical irresponsibility, based on very limited and incomplete data, concluded that the sub normal reproduce at much more rapid rates than normal stocks, and that this differential birth rate threatened to overwhelm civilization. Other equally bad studies were able to show that up to 85% of delinquents and criminals in jails and prisons were mentally retarded. Indeed, for awhile it almost seemed as though the nation were quite prepared to blame mental retardation for all of our social ills.

Thus were spread the seeds of the viscous rumors and beliefs which are still so common. Small wonder then, that prior to the establishment of the ARC groups, parents were ashamed of their retarded child. Who wouldn't be, if all that was said about them was true! Needless to say, these unproven theories are not accepted today by the experts. It was bad enough when sorcery and witchcraft decided the fate of the retarded. But for me, it is much more intolerable to have the retarded suffer in the name of science and be the victims of scientists who grossly misapplied the scientific method. These unsupported findings did, however, make sensational copy.

The net effect was an aroused public who bought the theory that all the social problems of the country could literally be solved in one generation if the retarded were only sterilized. Many states passed sterilization laws. In a few states, the retarded were zealously sterilized. In most others, the laws were on the books but sterilization was applied on a rather hit-and-miss basis. Today, people will argue for sterilization on the basis of specific individual cases, but the experts no longer claim it will cure our social ills or even reduce to any measureable degree the number of retarded children born.

Another effect of these unproven theories was for people to more and more regard the institutions as places to isolate the retarded. Protection was to be obtained, as it were, by withdrawing the retarded from society. All of this, of course, drastically altered the public image of the state institution. Whereas they were once regarded as training centers to develop the retarded, and were founded in the spirit of Christian Charity, they now became isolation centers

for undesirable people. Needless to say, public apathy and indifference mounted, and funds for their support dwindled.

The great depression probably served as the beginning for the reversal of public opinion. During the depression, the concept and public acceptance of the welfare state began. The depression convinced Americans that in time of great need, it is only the state that can handle the terrible people problems which are generated. During the early days of the great depression, the churches and private welfare agencies were swamped and literally plowed under by the needy. In desperation, the people demanded that the state take over welfare functions, and the state did.

The great depression was never really over until World War II began. During the war, everything was booming. Jobs were plentiful, workers were scarce. Acute staff shortages developed in state institutions, and to fill these positions, conscientious objectors were brought in. These people were appalled at many of the bad situations they had to live with in the institutions. As a battle starred veteran of World War II, I do not hold to the beliefs of the conscientious objectors, but I do thank them for the part some of them played in reforming the institutions after the war. They joined in with other public minded citizens to improve conditions and increase appropriations for the institutions. The timing of the reform movement was excellent. Tax collections had been good during the war. Expenses had been held down to bare subsistent levels. State treasuries were bulging.

This was the atmosphere which prevailed when the ARC groups were born. We found a ready acceptance by the community. As we fumbled around to find our place in the sun, we found ourselves courted by the Citizens Lobby for mental health. We were only too happy to join up with the others and make our news known to the legislators. Our story was a good one, and the legislators did a lot for us. Conditions were improved in the institutions; additional space was provided. Community programs began to gain a foothold. The support of education programs for the retarded was good. The news media responded generously and must be credited for providing us the major tool for re-educating the public as to the nature of mental retardation.

But around 1955 another change began to take place, and it is only today that we are truly feeling its effects. The state began to run out of money. Since the war expenditures had been higher than income until the point was reached when the war time surplus was depleted. In Minnesota, we even dug into reserves which previously had been considered untouchable. Today, our welfare program is on a pay-as-you-go basis. The state expenditures for its major items of highways, education, and welfare, have to equal its income of tax revenues. Our former method of financing state buildings was declared unconstitutional, and we must now come up with a responsible way of financing new buildings.

So today, the welfare program....our programs for the retarded....are directly tied into taxes. If we as citizens are willing to pay more taxes, we can get our welfare program off the dead center it now occupies. If we aren't willing to pay more taxes, our program can go only one way....downhill.

I think we can face the future better if we understand the past. The true purpose of history is to point out what has happened before so people can better make the decisions which will shape the future.

And so I conclude by saying what I said in the beginning. Science and religion have been the great positive forces benefitting the retarded. I urge you to support these endeavors.

Ignorance, socery, superstition, psuedo science, unproven theories, shallow experimentation, irresponsible speculation, and the manipulation of the affairs of the retarded for personal gain.....these are the dismal collection of human frailities which have worked against the retarded. I beg you to turn your back on these.

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