

65-LFR-MDH
ARC Speedy-Heck

Dear Friends of the Retarded,

Our Governor, Legislators and Citizens are more aware of the needs of the retarded than ever before. We anticipate that the 1965 Legislature will provide legislation and appropriations to make substantial progress for the retarded in both our communities and institutions.

However, having felt like Sonny Liston after the Clay fight during the past five sessions, let me strongly urge each of you to do even more now. Have you first studied and then contacted, informed and urged your legislators to support our Governmental Affairs Program? Have you and your legislators more than superficially seen the community services and institutions in your area? Have your legislators agreed to contact their fellow members serving in the key Welfare and Finance Committees of the Senate and House to appropriate funds for the implementation of our program? Have you told them you would pay increased taxes to do this? ~~xxx~~ If not, we must all accept our share of the responsibility if the urgent and critical needs of the retarded are not met.

In Minnesota and our Nation we can do so much for so many who need so little help, yet do so little for so few who need so much ~~help~~ help. Don't let anyone tell you our State can't afford to help the retarded. Knowledge and experience have proven that much can be done for these children and other truly handicapped people.

We need ~~now~~ more services and action and fewer pilot projects. Services are lagging far behind knowledge and experience. Every retarded person can be taught to do many things which 15 years ago were thought by so many to be impossible. I favor astronauts going to the moon, but if they reach it before our institutionalized retarded receive no more than bare survival care, or our community resident retarded are still denied any education or training in activity centers and workshops or vocational training, I will be most unhappy. Yet, unless we each study, speak and sell, this will be the

result.

For too many years, too many parents have failed to admit they had a retarded child or have asked for a bone instead of a bone with meat on it for their children. Likewise, too many citizens and legislators have not really seen our community services and institutions, or have, like some parents, developed ^{an} as ostrich-like attitude ~~about~~ toward them and have erroneously concluded that the retarded can't be helped. Likewise, for too many years, our dedicated and wonderful employees of the Department of Welfare and our institutions have lost too many legislative battles to now effectively advocate and fight for what they know is right for the retarded. No ^{one} ~~one~~ person is to be blamed. We all are.

We who have for years annually prepared our Governmental Affairs Program know there is not one ounce of fat or frill in it. We must make substantial progress in all services for all retarded in both our communities and institutions, and not one versus the other.

Why do we need every cent of the \$525,000 State ~~Aids~~ ^{Aids} for our day activity centers? None of the 23 state and community supported centers surveyed by the Minnesota ARC in 1964 were receiving the 50 per cent state aids possible by law. Their waiting lists totaled 121 and their 1963-64 annual budgets totaled \$258,000. There are several other centers which desperately need, but receive no state aids. More will develop during the next two years if state aids are provided.

Opportunity Workshop in Minneapolis is one of, if not the best, vocational training and sheltered workshop centers in the nation. Minnesota, however, is lagging behind in developing workshops. We need many more than two exclusively for the retarded. State aids are needed now.

The Department of Public Welfare and our Association recommend 833 additional employees for the 6,000 institutionalized retarded. Although Governor Holvaag has requested 578, and more than any other Governor, it is

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our opinion that this Legislature should restore the Governor's cut to that above recommended. Why?

Our recent survey and the American Association for Mental Deficiency standards conclusively show that this recommendation amounts to only one-third of the total needed to provide reasonable care, training and treatment for the retarded. ~~Neither~~ Neither your wife nor mine could care for 20, 50, 100 or 200 children. Yet, we ask our institution aids or technicians to do so. One legislator said recently, "I am a hog farmer. I would not think of building a new hog barn without also building an exercise pen. At Cambridge I saw the lack of fenced-in playgrounds and staff. We are dealing with human beings, not hogs."

I recently saw 126 severely retarded boys at Faribault's Linden Cottage, most of whom were in wheelchairs, not toilet trained and not feeding themselves, and 30 of whom were confined all day and every day to their beds. I asked Superintendent Engberg, "Why?". He replied that the 30 need not be in bed but were there for only one reason -- not enough aids and staff. One nurse and two aids advised that with more staff almost all could be taught to walk, to toilet and to feed themselves. This is true and shocking. Imagine making total bed patients or wheelchair patients out of children who can be taught to walk, or a lifetime of soiled pants or being fed for those who can be toilet trained and taught to feed themselves, just because we won't spend the money to hire the staff needed.

We are grateful that there is no overcrowding at Brainerd. Our studies and person visits to all institutions for the retarded and mentally ill conclusively show that Faribault is the most grossly understaffed and overcrowded, bar none. Cambridge rates a close second. If we are to complete Brainerd and eliminate the overcrowding at Cambridge, and if we are to eliminate the overcrowding and herd-like, hog barn use of obsolete and inadequate dormitories at Faribault -- most of which would be closed by the State Fire

Marshal and Department of Health if operated by private enterprise ---
2,750 new beds must be provided.

We have requested this Legislature to appropriate funds to build 900 new beds --- 400 for Faribault, 200 for Cambridge, and 300 for Brainerd. If the Legislature should continue to provide one 125-bed dormitory per session, it will take 22 sessions, or 44 years to solve the present building needs. We know that the Legislative Building Commission has recommended only one 125-bed dormitory for Faribault.

I urge your support of the balance of our program, although space will not permit comment.

If the eyes of our citizens were only opened to the needs of the Retarded, our program would be implemented in toto this session. We must each continue to open eyes, for whatever our faith may be, I am certain we can all agree with Jesus Christ's statement, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Mel Heckt, President.