

**MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CHILDREN
1911 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis. Minnesota 55403**

**PRESENTATION TO THE INTERIM COMMISSION
ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

APRIL 29, 1968 — STATE CAPITOL, ST. PAUL, MINN,

Chairman members of the committee, on behalf of the 9,400 mentally retarded children in the state of Minnesota receiving special education, I wish to thank you for the privilege of appearing here this afternoon. We have a deep concern for these children and the educational programs which are being offered to them nOW, as well as the programs which are being planned for the future, by interested members of this committee and the staff of the Department of Education. We are also deeply concerned for the other thousands of children in Minnesota who could use the services of special education but who do not have them,

Our agency has recently completed 11 regional meetings with professionals who work with the handicapped in all parts of Minnesota in which we have made an attempt to discover the gaps in services for the mentally retarded. One of the recurring themes heard throughout the state from teachers, superintendents,, principals, vocational adjustment counsellors, school nurses school psychologists. and school social workers, as well as others in the community, was the fact that the mentally retarded in our state and special education are in dire need of more help.

While Education,. 1967. (the Domian Report) ,, did not address itself directly to special education in Minnesota, there are a number of recommendations in the report which, if implemented, would have considerable impact on the education of handicapped children. Some of this impact could be destructive. It is because of our concern for the welfare of all handicapped children and. in particular, mentally retarded children, that we have asked for this opportunity to address the Interim Commission today.

Delivery of special education has changed greatly since the special education laws were passed in 1957. In 1957, establishing special classes where none existed seemed the most obvious and necessary solution to the problem of educating handicapped children. Eleven years later, we are aware of profound changes in the philosophy of the education of children with handicaps, and the techniques employed. The regional delivery of services, and the delivery of services in a variety of ways besides the traditional self-contained special class are examples of these changes.

Taken together handicapped children comprise a large group, but, particularly in less populous sections of the state, there may be too few handicapped for any one school district to provide quality education. We call your attention to the fact that of the 480 school districts in the state, only half have special education services. The practical solution in many of these instances would seem to be some system of area-wide services, shared by several school districts as well as further district consolidations.

Through special education aids, the State Department of Education has a substantial investment in special education in the local school districts. The responsibility for insuring the best possible use of state aids to provide quality education for handicapped children rests with the Special Education Section of the State Department of Education. At the present time, the Section does not have sufficient numbers of staff to assist school districts to upgrade present programs, or to organize cooperative services with neighboring districts. They are able only to respond to crises, to "Put out fires" not to promote programs or to insure the excellence of these programs.

Special Education has real meaning for the handicapped children since it lends to them dignity by helping them accomplish as much as their capacity allows. We believe this to be a basic, fundamental human right. We know that many children now receiving special education services will one day be self-supporting, will have the dignity of a job, will be full participants in our society, and will know the joy of a head held high as he receives his earned paycheck. I ask you, then, the name of these citizens, and from your own

concern for the total problem of education to avoid recommending any action that will reduce or remove the opportunity of even one of these children to achieve his place in society.

The recommendations in the Domian Report which affect special education-- the revised special education aid formula, for instance, and the placement of the Special Education Section within the Department of Education -- were made with no consultation with those most directly affected, namely the staff of the Special Education Section and special education administrators

the school districts. We submit that those recommendations in the Domian Report which affect special education were based on information merely inferred from the investigations in other areas

We suggest that, pending serious study of special education needs, none of those recommendations in the report which specifically affect special education be implemented,

instead the Minnesota Association for Retarded Children respectfully suggests that an in-depth study of special education undertaken so that whatever recommendations are made will insure the orderly delivery of high quality educational services to handicapped children.