

The original documents are located in Box 132, folder “May 2, 1974 - Speech, President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, Washington, DC” of the Gerald R. Ford Vice Presidential Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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EXCERPTS FROM THE REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD
TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING
PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED
AT THE WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C.
10 A.M. THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1974



America's handicapped are today emerging as an articulate new minority demanding direct involvement in the solution of its problems. The millions of citizens afflicted by varying degrees of physical and mental handicap are involved in liberating themselves. ^{THEY} ~~are~~ are rejecting the role of helpless victims whose fate is determined by others .

Joined behind the common banner of aid to the ^{HANDICAPPED} ~~are~~ is a cross-section of the American people --- in terms of handicapping conditions, age, race, religion, employment, skills, economic circumstances, volunteer interests, and so forth . There is unity in diversity . Talents are combined to attack different aspects of the problems and barriers that remain . Your strength lies in the cross-section that you represent .

The handicapped should no more be second-class citizens that persons should be stigmatized according to sex, age, or race . I endorse the liberation movement of the handicapped .

In the course of my public service in Washington I have witnessed profound changes in the American lifestyle , in technology , and in human consciousness . The process of developing job opportunities for the handicapped has received less attention than many other developments . This process was left in the past to the professional workers, the volunteers , the governmental committees on behalf of



the handicapped, the employers, the union officials, the employment agencies, the personnel directors, the rehabilitation counsellors , and representatives of other establishments . One crucial element was missing . That was the involvement of the handicapped person himself in determining his own fate .

Handicapped persons are very correctly demanding a piece of the action. You ~~they~~ want to take part in the decision-making processes that affect ~~their~~ your lives. You want a voice and a choice . ~~And that is what~~ You are asking only for your God-given rights and your inalienable liberties as American citizens .

My personal philosophy involves the flow of power back from the bureaucrats of Washington to the people . I commend your initiative . I respect your courage . I invite your involvement in your own destiny and that of our Nation .

~~It appears that~~ **T**he ~~handicapped~~ vehicle of change will ride better on four wheels than three . I refer to the inclusion of the handicapped individual as the fourth ---and most vital wheel --- along with the other wheels represented by the professional workers, the volunteers, and the employers .

Good -hearted folks once met at luncheons and committee meetings to do ~~good~~ deeds of charity for ~~the~~ people handicapped/and to decide what was best for them . Too much emphasis was placed on "handicap" and not enough on "people " . The handicapped are ~~handicapped~~ mature human beings . ~~and deserve the same status accordingly.~~ The day of paternalism is over .



We must enter a new partnership in which the handicapped are no longer deprived of basic rights as American citizens . I refer to such elementary things as the design of voting booths for persons in wheel chairs and of techniques for the blind to vote in ~~secluded~~ privacy . I refer to the handicapped who seek the same quality of education as others . And I refer to the handicapped ^{WHO} ~~A~~ seek the same degree of opportunity as others .

The new trend that you represent is not only healthy for the handicapped . It is healthy for America . Our democracy becomes stronger as more citizens participate in asserting their rights . If people are deprived of their rightful ~~places~~ places in our society , the fabric of freedom is weakened .

I would mislead you if I avoid one point . I say in greatest respect that when any liberation movement enters the political process , it also subjects itself to reversals and criticism . When you play the game , ~~you~~ you can't win them all . The paraplegics who play basketball from wheelchairs of the retarded know that . So do the ~~handicapped~~ teams/that compete in their own Olympics .

But you have not only your own courage but many potential allies . I realize that there is much that I have to learn about our mutual problems . I want to work with you in my capacity as Vice President . It is my personal ^{NEW} conviction that the Government must not just reluctantly hire the handicapped but actually go out of its way to recruit and employ handicapped workers for positions that have traditionally been restricted by arbitrary qualifications .

Let us work together to achieve a new era in mutual respect .

Let us do more in partnership .

Let us consult more .

Let us surmount our national handicaps of stereotyped and outmoded thinking and look with new vision at the human potential of all our people .



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