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ABSTRACT

A study of the employment problems facing physically and mentally handicapped youth is reported. To illustrate the main points, results of extensive interviews with seven handicapped youth are juxtaposed with statistics and findings. The study looks at the continuum of services offered to handicapped individuals, including understanding the disabilities and teaching mainstreamed students, teaching and training handicapped youth through vocational education, and postsecondary training and employment of handicapped youth. The impact of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 is assessed with emphasis on parent involvement in the Individualized Education Program process and Congress's failure to appropriate money. The level of service to handicapped youth by vocational education in high schools and the involvement in Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs by handicapped youth are also discussed. The continuum of service from preschool to employment is then presented as exemplified by several exceptional programs. A narrative follows of events of 1982, during which the gains registered by advocates for the handicapped population were tested in all branches of the federal government. Recommendations are made regarding creation of a national commission to study the economics of preparing handicapped individuals for work and amendments to and implementation of the Job Training Partnership Act. (YLB)

SEVEN SPECIAL KIDS:

EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF HANDICAPPED YOUTH

A Study Prepared for the
Office of Youth Programs,
Employment and Training Administration
United States Department of Labor

by

R. C. Smith

MDC, Inc.
Post Office Box 2226
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

June 1983

August 24, 1983

Dear Reader,

On behalf of the ARC/US, we would like to call your attention to the attached report, which is the result of an over two year investigation of employment problems of handicapped youth, including those with mental retardation.

The report has some important recommendations, including these:

(1) That the new Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) should be amended to admit handicapped youth into programs on the same basis as handicapped adults--without regard to economic criteria.

(2) That the JTPA should be closely monitored to observe the effect on the enrollment of handicapped youth, limitations in work experience programs, the 70/30 percent training-administrative and support split, and the application of first generation performance standards.

The author noted concern that as presently written, the Act could result in serving fewer rather than more handicapped youth. This concern naturally worries us, particularly because the line of supportive reasoning seems sound.

Also, as you will see, the author has told the story not just through statistics, but also through the results of extensive interviews with seven handicapped youth. Their individual lives shine through the report, illustrating its main points, and adding impact.

All of these findings and recommendations of the report are listed in the brief, eight-page introduction. This introduction also keys the reader to the pages on which each of the findings and recommendations are discussed more fully. We found that this method of presentation made it easier to quickly digest the emphasis of the full report.

While we feel the introduction is especially important, we are certain that reviewing the remainder of the document will also be useful and fascinating as you learn about Billy, Brent, Darlene, Harold, Maria, Mickey and Polly, as these children approach the world of work.

Respectfully,

Alan Abeson, Ed.D.
Executive Director

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Association for Retarded Citizens of the United States
Formerly National Association for Retarded Citizens

THE ROOSEVELT CENTENNIAL YOUTH PROJECT

2001 S Street, N.W., Fifth Floor • Washington, D.C. 20009 • (202) 462-4480

August 16, 1983

R. C. Smith
MDC, Inc.
P. O. Box 2226
1717 Legion Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dear R. C:

Your study, Seven Special Kids: Employment Problems of Handicapped Youth was well worth the wait. Its insights and recommendations deserve to be widely read. Public policy-makers need to grapple with how what they have wrought affects the lives of the citizenry. Your frank and moving account of these special young people should help them to do so.

We welcome the opportunity to assist you, one of our Roosevelt Youth Project Policy Fellows, in disseminating the results of your study. We are particularly concerned that key Congressional committee members and staff become familiar with your suggestions for policy changes. The report is 'must' reading for anyone involved with adequate vocational preparation or effective employment and training services to handicapped young people.

Sincerely,

Frank

Frank J. Slobig

FJS/ro

A Project of The Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, Hyde Park, New York

Funding for this study was provided by the Office of Youth Programs of the Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor under Contract number 27-37-80-01. Researchers undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express their professional judgments. Therefore, points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the federal government sponsors of the study.

SEVEN SPECIAL KIDS

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Introduction and Summary

This study was commissioned by the Office of Youth Programs, United States Department of Labor, as part of a broader, overall examination of employment initiatives for youth undertaken by MDC, Inc., of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1979. Work on this two-year study of the employment problems facing physically and mentally handicapped youth began late the following year.

To grasp the dimensions of those problems and to be in a position to comment upon their solution, it is necessary first to look at the educational, vocational, and transitional programs in place to prepare the population of handicapped youth for employment. Young, potential workers do not just appear on the job market. They are there because their education and training has sent them there, prepared to whatever degree. With handicapped youth, that education and training -- because it often has to be in one way or another special -- is most important.

A review of current literature on the subject makes it possible to isolate major issues, such as, for instance, the "mainstreaming" issue or employment disincentives. To prepare for the task of writing this report, the author examined that literature and spent many hours interviewing key officials in the handicapped advocacy community and in government and private life. Later on, many of those individuals were helpful in providing access to the national statistics which form the backdrop against which the field work was done.

While the field work touches on a number of states and communities, it focuses sharply on four cities within the frameworks of their respective states: Seattle in Washington; Flint in Michigan; San Antonio in Texas; and Charlotte in North Carolina. In carrying out site visits to those states and communities, the author is indebted for assistance to Bonnie Snedeker, who also assisted in writing case studies based on that work.

It is not the author's intention to suggest that these four communities or their states are singularly representative of thousands of communities in the fifty states. They were chosen for geographical, economic, and social diversity. They were chosen as well for contrasting approaches toward and varying levels of development in the provision of education and training leading to employment of handicapped youth. The effort here has been to focus all the major issues and to show how they are dealt with in reasonably typical American communities ordinarily and, in some cases, extraordinarily. For those purposes, any number of other communities or states could have served as well.

Indeed other communities in other states find their way into this study, particularly where exceptional programs are sought out (Chapter V) in an effort to provide a flow of exemplary programming that -- were it in place across the nation -- might take handicapped youth from preschool identification and assessment through school, training, and into employment. In this search, there are stop-offs in New York City; Escanaba, Michigan; Washington, D. C.; Austin, Texas; Lane County, Oregon; Lansing, Michigan; Bayside, Long Island, New York; and other places.

If focusing the study itself on the local or "action" level has the advantage of making it possible to see how policy actually works, it also has an even greater advantage. It provides the lens through which we can look at the young people who live with the handicaps referred to in the legislation intended to serve their cause, and at their parents, teachers, friends, and employers.

It is here, at the level of the individual, that policy considerations must begin. It is only through intensive work with the seven young people and their families who make up the central focus of this study that the author makes bold to suggest the recommendations that appear in Chapter VI, and which are summarized, along with some major findings, here.

* * * * *

Findings seem bare without the context of facts, figures, and argument. The reader particularly interested in specific findings here is urged to read the chapter in which the background of discussion appears, paying particular attention to the pages cited here with the finding.

- The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 clearly has had a positive impact on overall service to handicapped children, but the degree to which handicapped children have been moved into the "least restrictive environment" for their education is less clear, and there is evidence that "significant numbers of unserved handicapped children are to be found in regular classrooms." (Chapter II, p. 13.)
- Despite a high percentage of parents signing or verbally endorsing their handicapped children's Individualized Education Program (IEP) in public schools, actual involvement of parents in the IEP process -- intended by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act -- has been disappointing, and the parental role is described often as "passive." (Chapter II, pp. 16-17.)
- One of the problems associated with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 is that Congress has never appropriated the money promised at the time the legislation was drafted. The future in that regard looks gloomy, particularly in view of the worsening shortage of special education teachers. (Chapter II, pp. 37-41.)

- Physically and mentally handicapped youth have increased as a proportion of all youth in vocational education programs, largely as a result of the 10 percent set-aside of vocational funds for that purpose. But the percentage remains well below what might be expected from the prevalence of those youth in the general population. Furthermore, the level of service to handicapped youth by vocational education in high schools is uneven, and suspected high dropout rates are seen as a result of handicapped youths finding little of value in traditional academic school fare. (Chapter III, pp. 46-51.)

- The record of employment of handicapped individuals in the United States is a dreary one, with less than half of non-institutionalized handicapped individuals between 16 and 64 years of age working. But while involvement in Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs by handicapped youth has increased over recent years -- with the rate for handicapped youth involvement nearly equaling the rate of involvement for handicapped adults in 1982 -- that rate of involvement is still below expected prevalence figures. (Chapter IV, pp. 83-88.)

- Placement records of both vocational education and CETA programs suggest that handicapped individuals have placement rates after training comparable to the rates for non-handicapped individuals. A breakdown of CETA population characteristics suggests, however, that CETA programs may have a bias for service toward white over minority clients. That, in turn, suggests that CETA programs may have dealt mainly with the least handicapped and most advantaged of the overall handicapped youth population. (Chapter IV, pp. 88-90.)

- An MDC survey conducted in the summer of 1981 indicates that CETA prime sponsors have had trouble identifying handicapped individuals because of lack of adequate assessment in their programs, and because of lack of contact with the service agencies for handicapped individuals in their own communities. Physical accessibility to CETA programs is another problem reported by a significant number of prime sponsors. Employer attitudes were rated as negative by fully one-third of responding CETA programs and, while placement rates of CETA handicapped youth were relatively good, retention rates were reported as not so good. (Chapter IV, pp. 90-94.)

- At least one site investigated as part of the work for this study (San Antonio) suggests that handicapped youth may achieve initial post-training earnings comparable to those of non-handicapped youth under certain conditions of training. (Chapter IV, pp. 98-99.)

- A number of national studies indicate that disabled or handicapped workers produce good safety and production records. Cost-benefit studies show that the benefits to employers and the handicapped workers can be great. Even more dramatic are the savings to the taxpayers at large as a result of the substitution of tax-productive employment for tax-expending support -- a savings estimated at over $1 million in one program serving 176 handicapped individuals in the first year after training. (Chapter IV, pp. 105-110.)

- To these specific findings must be added another, of a more general nature, which weaves through the study, particularly in the narratives dealing with the handicapped youths. Nothing that happens to a handicapped youth is more important than the way that youth's parents react to the handicap. Strong support coupled with a willingness to assist the youth in reaching his or her potential is crucial for the youth's happiness and success. Therefore the organizations that work to spread information to parents about their rights and those that offer peer support and advice are among the most important nationally and deserving of public as well as private support.

Chapter V attempts to present the continuum of service from preschool to employment as exemplified by several exceptional programs in place now around the country. That continuum includes (1) early identification (Child Find, national, Chapter II, pp. 14-16; Closer Look, national, Chapter II, p. 19, and Chapter III, pp. 68-69); (2) early education (P.S. 231, Bayside, Long Island, New York, Chapter V, pp. 120-126); (3) parental support (Chapter V, pp. 126-129); (4) linkages in school-to-job training (Michigan Interagency Agreement, Chapter III, pp. 75-79; Escanaba, Michigan, Chapter V, pp. 131-133); (5) assessment for training (San Antonio CETA-Goodwill, Chapter V, pp. 133-136); (6) CETA training (Lane County, Oregon, Chapter V, pp. 136-138); (7) skills training for the mentally handicapped (Marc Gold-CETA, Austin, Texas, Chapter V, pp. 138-142); (8) placement of the physically handicapped (Rusk Institute, New York City, New York, Chapter V, pp. 142-145); (9) industry-wide placement (Projects with Industry -- Electronic Industries Foundation, Washington, D. C., Chapter V, pp. 145-146); (10) sheltered workshops (Nevins Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, Chapter V, pp. 147-150).

Chapter VI includes a narrative of events of 1982, during which the gains that had been registered by advocates for the handicapped population were put to the test in the administrative, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government. That story is covered in Chapter VI, pp. 151-164. An updated review of a number of programs written about in earlier chapters, many of them now suffering from loss of funding, appears on pp. 165-167.

The author's concern that the new Job Training Partnership Act, which goes into effect October 1, 1983, may result in no increase in or even a decrease from CETA levels of enrollment of handicapped youth in training is expressed on pp. 168–171.

A discussion of the disincentives to training and employment affecting handicapped individuals (covered briefly in Chapter IV, pp. 118–119) is expanded in Chapter VI, pp. 171–176.

Finally, Chapter VI presents the author's recommendations, beginning with creation of a National Commission to study the economics of supporting nonproductive individuals with handicaps versus training them for productive lives. That study would focus particularly on disincentives that keep handicapped individuals from working. In addition, specific recommendations which could be carried out while the Commission is at work include:

- The new Job Training Partnership Act should be amended at once to admit handicapped youth into programs on the same basis as handicapped adults -- without regard to economic criteria. (Chapter VI, p. 177.)
- As it goes into effect, JTPA should be monitored closely to observe the effect on the enrollment of handicapped youth of limitations in work experience programs, the 70/30 percent training-administrative and support split, and the application of first-generation performance standards. (Chapter VI, p. 177.)
- The 10 percent set-aside of funds for handicapped students mandated by the Vocational Education Act should be continued, or increased, in the reauthorization of the VEA currently under consideration. (Chapter VI, p. 177.)
- Governors should see to it that a representative of Vocational Rehabilitation or some other advocacy group for handicapped individuals

sits on the State Job Training Coordinating Council to help focus the attention of state planning on that specific problem area. To assure that information on state and local initiatives involving training of handicapped youths and adults is shared broadly across the system, some form of interstate networking should be considered. (Chapter VI, p. 178.)

- Local PICs with the authority to designate service deliverers should include similarly well-informed membership from the community of advocacy for the handicapped. (Chapter VI, p. 178.)

- Job Training Partnership Act programs for handicapped youth should capitalize on the expertise available in virtually every community. All potential clients should be assessed by professionals who are sufficiently skilled to identify handicaps, to assist in the mainstreaming of handicapped individuals where feasible, and to assist in referral to specific programs for handicapped individuals where that alternative seems more productive. Planning for local JTPA programs should begin with this assessment and referral process and go on to encourage agencies that work with handicapped individuals to come up with programs for funding. (Chapter VI, p. 179.)

Chapter VII, which concludes the study, brings the reader up to date on the seven special youths whose efforts to find employment are traced from grade school into the world of work. Those youths are seen as a group first in Chapter I, pp. 5-7, where they are viewed as they were in April of 1977, during the hullabaloo over regulations to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In the final chapter, we see them again in April, 1983, six years later.

This study is dedicated to those special young people, to their parents and teachers and friends, and to all of the others who helped make the report possible by taking time to talk with the author, sometimes more time than they could afford. It is dedicated, too, to Libby and to Elisabeth, whose names are not herein, but who endure with a charm and grace that teach all who come within their sight.

I. Seven Special Kids

On April 5, 1977, a small band of individuals with handicaps carried mattresses, food, and battery chargers for wheelchairs into the regional offices of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in San Francisco. "We are like the audience in 'Network' that shouts: 'We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore,'" said Barry Ryan, who has muscular dystrophy.[1]

That same day more than 150 others occupied HEW offices in Denver. Some carried placards reading: "Califano, What's the Score? We demand 504." Later in the day they blocked traffic on streets adjacent to Denver's Federal Building for 40 minutes. "If we are to be liberated, no longer can we go back to the position of being locked away in institutions, dependent on our mamas and papas," said Don Galloway, executive director of the Colorado Governor's Advisory Council, and blind. "We have to stand up for ourselves."[2]

In Washington, the protesters sang "We Want 504" to the tune of "We Shall Overcome," the pulsating protest song of the 1960's black civil rights movement. "I marched for my civil rights as a black man in the '60s," George Reed, also blind, told a reporter. "I never thought I'd see the day when handicapped people would rise up and demand their rights. We've been begging for a long time..."[3]

That evening some of the Washington protesters rolled their wheelchairs on the lawn of Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph Califano's home, to emphasize their determination. It is not recorded whether the Secretary was at home or, if he was, whether he came out to speak to his visitors.

Califano was taking the heat for what many Americans with handicaps felt was his delay in signing the regulations that would make operative

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In the spring of 1977, only months after the election, Califano didn't see it as delay. "The previous administration took two and one-half years to produce a complex regulation that it then refused to sign," he told the press. "I believe it is reasonable for me to take two and one-half months to examine those regulations so that I may understand them and assess their implications."[4]

Reasonable or not, the national community of handicapped individuals was fully aroused. Word had spread that the purpose of the delay was to dilute the potency of 504. President Jimmy Carter had promised to support their cause, and handicapped people had voted for him. They felt that the time for consideration of the regulations had passed.

While the new regs might have been complicated, there was nothing complicated about Section 504 of the law. Only forty words long, it packs a historic wallop:

"No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, solely on the basis of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal assistance."

The demonstrations beginning on April 5 continued in several locations for a number of days, in some cases weeks. On April 28, Secretary Califano signed the Section 504 regs. Newsweek described the sweeping changes mandated by the law:

"The regulation... applies to any school, college, hospital, or other institution receiving HEW funds. It prohibits employers from refusing to hire the disabled -- including victims of cancer and heart disease -- if their handicaps don't interfere with their ability to do the job. It also requires employers to make 'reasonable accommodation' to their handicapped workers."[5]

Advocates for the cause of individuals with handicaps were delighted with the regulations in their final form. Frank Bowe, director of the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities and an advocate, preached harmony in a memorandum written on the day of the signing. "Whatever our feelings about the delay and the proposed changes (which in the end were not made; the regulation is strong, far stronger in fact than I believe we had any reason to expect), we must now recognize that implementation and enforcement will require cooperation with HEW. We must support the regulation against those who will attack it and seek to weaken its effects."6/

Those close to the situation knew what Bowe meant. The delay in signing the regulation expressed a public hesitancy in dealing with inequities affecting handicapped people at least as real as the good intentions behind the language of Section 504.

On the surface the new regulation was the crowning achievement in a string of legislative victories which had as its goal bringing handicapped individuals into the mainstream of American life. In 1975, President Ford had signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which placed in the hands of the public school system responsibility for educating handicapped youth. Then there was the companion to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act -- Section 503 -- which forbade discrimination against individuals with handicaps in private employment for most businesses doing contract work with the federal government. Taken all together, this legislation promised open public and private doors for education, training, and employment.

But a promise made in the halls of law must still be accepted in the hearts of the people governed. This would take time. Even the most optimistic advocate of change anticipated that the struggle would continue for the minority of the handicapped even as it had for the minority of blacks and women. The major beneficiaries, they thought, would be the youth -- young people with physical or mental handicaps who were then of school age. Armed with this new legislation and sustained by a new mood of public concern, they might come to enjoy fully the opportunities those who had gone before had missed.

* * * * *

While many youths have been interviewed in the course of this study, and dozens make fleeting appearances here, seven of them provide the personal centerpiece around which the narrative flows.

They were selected only after interviews with many other youths were conducted and results studied. While none of them is a "typical" handicapped youth -- whatever that might be -- the group presents a composite picture whose elements reveal most aspects of the problem. If most of them seem capable of holding competitive employment, that is because most handicapped youth are capable of holding competitive employment. If, for all of that, many are not doing so, that is because this also is true.

Together, the seven young people are a composite or mosaic of sorts. But there is nothing composite about them individually. They are real and their problems are represented as fully and authentically as possible. Their names are changed to protect them and their families from any possible invasion of privacy; here and there an unessential fact is omitted or changed for the same reason.

They are followed in this study over a period of a number of years, the result of interviews with them and their parents, teachers, and friends touching on past events. The actual term of the study, however, is 18 months, which by itself is thought to provide sufficient time for changes in circumstances to be observed. Some of them are still in school as of this writing; a few are employed; a few more are not employed.

In April, 1977, it is safe to say that none of them was paying much attention to the turbulent events swirling around Secretary Califano's signing of the regulations to Section 504. One was a psychiatric patient in a hospital; the rest were in school, all but one of them engaged in the slow and arduous process of adjusting, or trying to adjust, to problems that seemed always to keep them behind their fellow schoolmates.

* * * * *

<u>Billy</u> was 13

Billy was born deaf. In the spring of 1977, he was living with his natural mother who was separated from her husband and working as a waitress without the means to care for her son. He had been sent to school late, at nine years of age, past the time when it is usually possible to teach deaf youths to talk. His mother was asking herself painful and difficult questions about her ability to keep Billy in her home in Robeson County, North Carolina.

<u>Brent</u> was 12

Brent's mother remembers the fuss over Section 504. "Vaguely," she says. "I was more involved in our personal situation." In the spring of 1977, Brent's entire family was involved in sessions at the Charlotte, North Carolina, Mental Health Clinic because school officials considered that his problems could be emotional in nature. One year away from junior high school, Brent was on the precipice. He was having a bad experience with a teacher, not his first. He was falling farther and farther behind his classmates each day in school. On the surface, Brent seemed fully able to do the work. He was intelligent enough. But his grades were miserable. His mother wondered: Am I Brent's problem? What is Brent's problem?

<u>Darlene</u> was 14

The early prognosis for Darlene, born with hydrocephalus and spina bifida, was grimmer than the one for Mickey (below). The doctors, her mother remembered, did not expect her to survive her first year. Her early life was a series of major operations and surgical adjustments. By the time she entered school in Seattle, her physical condition had stabilized. In her early school years she was regarded by the other students incuriously as "different." By the spring of 1977, she was in the eighth grade, although she stood only four foot seven inches in height, and was the subject sometimes of derision and even abuse from her classmates. Her mother noticed that headaches and other minor illnesses often seemed to coincide with these unpleasant experiences at school or with examinations.

<u>Harold</u> was 15

In the winter of 1977, Harold was a "B" student in a junior high school in Seattle, Washington, described by those who knew him as a quiet, well-behaved boy. In the spring of 1977, he was a psychiatric patient in a hospital, diagnosed as schizophrenic. This sudden change of fortune seemed not so sudden to his family. For several years, Harold had grown increasingly uncommunicative and in the months before his "breakdown" had complained of "confusing voices" in his head. His mother says: "Signing Harold into the hospital was probably the worst day of my life. We didn't really know if he would ever be coming home again. We'd been through that with his brother already -- it was like a nightmare that was never going to end."

<u>Maria</u> was 16

Maria is a quiet, shy, girl with a trusting smile. She is moderately mentally retarded. In the spring of 1977, she was enrolled in a San Antonio high school, beginning at last to move into a vocational area -- printing -- that held promise and excitement for her. Frightened as always about the prospects for her daughter, her mother continued to try to shelter her.

<u>Mickey</u> was 19

Mickey could walk and that put him one up on the doctors' predictions. Born with spastic cerebral palsy, he was not expected to be able to live an ambulatory life. But his father never put much stock in the medical odds and Mickey had plenty of help at home learning to get around. In the spring of 1977, he was a senior in a Flint, Michigan, high school and student manager of both the football and basketball teams.

<u>Polly</u> was 15

In the spring of 1977, Polly was a ninth grader with no apparent problems at all. One of nine children on a farm in Belleville, Michigan, she had been healthy all her life. But she had begun to develop headaches recently and, when she flunked her eye test, she ended up in a doctor's office. He thought he saw something out of the way and sent her to a specialist.

> "When he was little he wanted to be a brain surgeon, then later on he wanted to be an orthodontist, now he wants to be a truck driver." Brent's Mother.

II. Understanding/Teaching

When Brent was adopted at seven weeks, he was a normal baby so far as anyone could tell. In a small kindergarten class of 10 a perceptive teacher spotted a potential problem. "Watch out for mirror vision," she told Brent's mother.

But Brent's mother had no context in which to understand the remark. Her son played happily with other children. In the first grade in a private school he was average. In the second grade, problems began. The other children were reading and writing. Brent couldn't even copy successfully. His words came out backwards or with letters reversed. He daydreamed through conferences with his teacher and parents. Pirates, pirate ships. Still, that seemed normal enough, his mother remembers.

At home or at school, his attention span was short. In the third grade, with a martinet for a teacher, Brent never completed an assignment. "When he came home we would work with him for hours to get something some other kid might do in twenty minutes. It was agony for us, one and all." Brent reacted the way a child reacts. "He would say his arm hurt, he was tired, he couldn't do it."

Requests to the teacher for an evaluation led the family to the local mental health clinic. The thought was that if he had emotional problems -- as it appeared that he did -- the entire family needed to work with that. "I guess by then he did have emotional problems," his mother recalls. "I know I did." The clinic asked her for permission to have a psychiatrist look in on the class. His verdict was that Brent was being treated as a number rather than as a pupil. He suggested a change of schools.

After a year in another private school -- an "open classroom" school where what may have been freedom for other students was chaos for Brent -- he was enrolled in the Charlotte, North Carolina, public school system. Here the shock of being exposed to tougher, street-wise youths was mitigated by an initial ability to get by academically.

That was the fifth grade. Then came the disaster of the sixth grade. It was 1977 and Brent was in his last year before junior high school, farther behind his classmates than ever before. His mother called a new service of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system's Exceptional Children Division called Child Find that had been advertised as helping to identify handicapped youth. State Senator Carolyn Mathis of Mecklenburg County, who heads this school service in Charlotte, found reference in her notes to this first meeting with Brent's mother:

"His mother called us in November, 1977, when Brent was in regular class. The notes indicate that she suspected LD, that his reading comprehension was low, and that he was just beginning the seventh grade. I sent her materials about the new law (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) and about the IEP (Individualized Education Program)... The notes indicate that she took action and that Brent was placed in a special education class."

LD. Learning Disabled. A compendium term including a variety of educational handicaps, including usually dyslexia. In 1937 a psychologist named Samuel T. Orton published a book, Reading, Writing and Speech Problems in Children, which identified a disability in children of normal and often superior intelligence which made it extremely difficult and sometimes impossible for them to learn to read and write under ordinary classroom circumstances and by usual teaching methods.

But while Orton's work came to be regarded as a classic, the lessons it taught were slow to be accepted and even slower to penetrate the nation's school systems. Because the LDs' intelligence is normal, schools have not been anxious to treat them as "special" children. Yet for all of the fact that they are often great problem-solvers capable of high creativity -- Woodrow Wilson, Thomas A. Edison, Gustave Flaubert, and W. B. Yeats all apparently were dyslexics -- the average learning disabled youth struggles with despair through every day he is in school.

Eileen Simpson, a writer who is dyslexic, tells of a young woman tested in the very superior range who throughout her schooling appended a doodle to all of her work consisting of a collapsed version of the words, "Help Me." No one of her teachers ever thought to ask what this doodle meant.[7]

Until passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, learning disabilities were not "handicaps" in the sense that the school systems were mandated to deal with this problem through special education, although some schools, including North Carolina's, were beginning to recognize it. It is little wonder that more often than not problems like Brent's were diagnosed late when they were diagnosed at all.

Then, with the Act, came the enormous task of writing regulations for a disability still poorly understood. As one observer has noted, the regulation writers had one year to "define, if necessary, and devise uniform procedures for identifying a condition that has no single agreed-upon cause, no single agreed-upon treatment, and no single professional home."[8]

These regulations were being brought into being in 1977, the same year that Brent at last became a special education student. They were part of the overall regulations for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142). More than any other legislative action in the nation's history, this act would focus the full force of attention on schooling for special children.

* * * * *

As late as the 1960s, special education was an educational stepchild. John Gliedman and William Roth have noted: "Perhaps one handicapped child in eight -- over one million handicapped children -- received no education whatsoever, while more than half of all handicapped children did not receive the special instructional services they needed."[9]

The courts began to make their presence felt in the 1970s, especially with suits in Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia establishing the right of handicapped youth to a free, public education. In both cases the courts concluded that exclusion from school placed the handicapped youth at such risk that it violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 charged the public school system with the task of providing a free and appropriate education to all children beginning in 1978 and of making facilities physically accessible to the handicapped by 1980. The Act also required that handicapped children be educated along with other children in regular classroom settings whenever possible -- that they be educated in the "least restrictive environment."

By every measurement, the task was a huge one. The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped reported that 3.8 million handicapped youth (7.4 percent of the school-age population) were being served by state and local educational agencies during the 1978-79 school year, when Public Law 94-142 went into effect. But how many children actually should have been served?

Sponsors of the Act in Congress estimated that there were 8 million youths between the ages of 0-21 with mental or physical disabilities. The estimate was based on 12.5 percent of the non-institutionalized, non-student population between ages 16-64 having such disabilities.10/

Clearly, there were youths below and above school age who needed, and perhaps were not getting, services varying from diagnosis to assistance finding employment. But what of those who actually were of school age? Some were not in school at all. While there are no hard data on how many of these there were or are, an authority on the problems of the handicapped put the figure at one million as of 1979.11/

Just as clearly, not all of the handicapped youths in school were being served at all, and not all of the 3.8 million in the service group were being served appropriately, much less in the "least restrictive environment." A number of studies have suggested that children (particularly minority children) have been dumped into special education classes through use of culturally biased assessment techniques. Whatever truth there is in this, it is also true that many genuinely handicapped children were not receiving the special education they needed.

No question that Public Law 94-142 has had a positive impact on overall service to handicapped children. The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped reported that 4.03 million children received special education in the 1979-80 school year, an increase from 7.4 percent of the total school population the year before to 9.5 percent. Less certain is the degree to which handicapped youth have been moved into the "least restrictive environment." Approximately 94 percent of the children identified as handicapped in school were being served in regular public schools in 1977-78 as compared to 93 percent in 1976-77. Regular class placements of handicapped youth went from 67.85 percent in 1976-77 to 69.31 percent in 1977-78. The Bureau suggests, however, that "changes at this level are not necessarily related to the implementation of less restrictive placement policies, but may simply reflect an increasing proportion of mildly handicapped students being served."[12]

And there is what BEH calls "increasing evidence" that "significant numbers of unserved handicapped children are to be found in regular classrooms..."[13] Two recent studies are cited to support this opinion. The first, conducted in 24 school districts, found that three-fourths of the individuals interviewed felt that regular classrooms contained children who needed special education services they were not getting and suggested three reasons why this was the case:

"First, schools with fewer special education staff, facilities, and services tend to identify fewer children as needing special help. Second, variations in diagnostic practices and definitions of handicapping conditions within states can lead both to under-identification and over-identification of children as handicapped. Third, regular classroom teachers and other school personnel may avoid referring children for special services because some believe that doing so would keep the child from being stigmatized by a label."[14]

The second study put the primary reason stated above even more bluntly. It found that school staff in 22 districts studied tended to avoid identifying more handicapped children than the district could accommodate with current resources for special education.[15]

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Until November, 1977, when his mother called Child Find, Brent was one of those youths who had been "unserved in regular classrooms." Armed with Senator Mathis's advice, Brent's mother determined to change that.

The case was not untypical of those handled by Child Find, an agency created by Public Law 94-142 to serve as an identification network across the nation for children with special needs. In North Carolina, the Special Education Act of 1977 supports Child Find and in Charlotte, Senator Mathis spreads the word to parents that services are available through the schools.

Some of Child Find's work is with preschool children. "A lot of what we do is preventive and of course intended to identify the kids who may have real problems," Senator Mathis says. Word of the service's existence is spread through media and contacts with the network of parents of handicapped youth. Screening is done by volunteers. The children are tested for visual and hearing problems, gross motor and fine motor skills, concepts (night and day), communication skills, identification of letters, knowledge of their names, coping (what to do when hungry), etc. The ones with serious problems are given professional screening at the local Mental Health Authority's Center for Human Development. They are referred to the appropriate agency which works with the family to pave the way for a smooth entrance into the school system with all problems flagged so that an appropriate educational track can be selected.

But a good bit of Child Find's work around the country deals with youths who are already in school but have not yet been identified as requiring special education. "Our first job," says Senator Mathis, "is to explain to the parent how to begin the process for identifying and serving and about the IEP."

The IEP (Individualized Education Program) is the major element of 94-142 dealing with identification and understanding of disability. The law requires that children identified as having problems undergo testing and that the psychologist, teachers, parents, and any other interested parties meet to determine the IEP. When completed, the IEP must consist of (1) a statement of the child's present levels of educational performance, (2) a statement of annual goals including short-term objectives, (3) a statement of the special education to be provided to the child and the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular educational programs, (4) the projected dates for initiation of services and anticipated duration of services, and (5) criteria and evaluation procedures for determining at least on an annual basis whether short-term objectives and goals are being met.

Brent's mother initiated action to have her son tested. She remembers being informed that he could be in an LD class and being asked to sign forms. "At that time I was pretty much unaware. I was just glad that he was going to a class that would give him some help, so, sure, I signed."

It was 1977 and Public Law 94-142 had not gone into effect, but the school's failure to invite Brent's mother to a discussion about the IEP is not untypical of what happens elsewhere in the country. "The principals are supposed to inform them (the parents), but often they do not. We don't know what to do about that. I always tell the parents to ask the principal to notify them before the committee meets," Senator Mathis says. (In the past year the Charlotte Child Find has developed forms to document that process.)

A recent study indicated that while 77 percent of parents of public school children specifically approved the IEP either by signing it or verbally endorsing it, only 49 percent served as part of the committee, providing information contributing to the IEP development.[16] The BEH commented: "More effective promotion of parent involvement in pupil planning and programming is needed. Only about half of the IEP meetings are attended by parents, and the parent role in decision-making for their child is often limited to a passive one."[17]

Involvement of parents in the process by law was the result of a long struggle by advocates for handicapped youth. It was thought that parental involvement would provide valuable input into the process of identifying problems of the children, and also that the "partnership" between parents and teachers would bring the parent into the day-by-day educational process in a more understanding way.

From the beginning there have been skeptics. Noting that schools in the past have customarily ignored parental involvement, Gliedman and Roth observe: "A lack of good intentions and sincere concern is rarely the cause of the professional's inability to share decision-making power with the parent. As a general rule the professional has extraordinary difficulty in seeing when and where he oversteps the bounds of his legitimate authority."[18/]

But even earlier the process of parental involvement is restrained by a lack of awareness and/or commitment on the part of the parents themselves. In Charlotte, the Exceptional Children's Advocacy Council (ECAC), which is the creature of Child Find, did a study indicating that only one out of 30 parents even knew what an IEP was. Recently the city's junior high schools staged an awareness clinic, widely advertised, and only one parent showed up.

What's the problem? It is in part a matter of ignorance and in part a question of parental unwillingness to accept the circumstances of the child's handicap. One of the largest groups of handicapped youth are mentally retarded, a condition that many parents are unwilling to acknowledge. Another large group, the learning disabled, seem similarly threatening to middle-class parents. "Hey, I've got my own handicap," says Chester Helms, a mobility-impaired member of the Charlotte ECAC with an LD child, "but I still have a problem with the words 'learning disabled.'"

The problem is one that local organizations like the Charlotte ECAC, assisted by national advocacy groups, are attempting to meet. The Charlotte council's goals are to advocate for appropriate education for exceptional children, to conduct community awareness campaigns, to lobby for funding for services to exceptional children, and to link with the statewide Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities in providing specific-case advocate help. "All that translates into working with and in the interests of parents," says Joan Belk, Charlotte

ECAC chairman and a member of the Governor's Council. "We won't begin to be effective until we get more parental involvement."

Perhaps because she was, herself, physically handicapped, Brent's mother was a candidate for real involvement. Fighting to stay out of a wheelchair as a result of hip problems and resulting chronic arthritis, she watched helplessly as Brent continued to do poorly. "He did have one special ed class, but he was being mainstreamed in the other classes and getting F's."

One of the more frustrating aspects of this process for Brent's mother was that he was not identified as an LD student in the classes in which he was involved with other, non-handicapped students. While this was in some part the result of his own reluctance to be identified as "different," it is still true that the school had no systematic way of informing regular teachers of the presence in their class of handicapped youngsters. The school's concern here was to avoid "labeling" youth as handicapped, but what it meant to Brent's mother was -- "the teachers couldn't know to try to give special help."

Brent's ascent to high school grade-level meant another school and the same, old problems. The family tried mental health counseling at the suggestion of the school psychologist, and the counselor informed them that the problem lay with the schools. "When the school psychologist heard that, he hit the ceiling," Brent's mother recalled. In high school, Brent had a "super" special education teacher in language arts and a major headache in every other class he took. He continued to have sequencing problems. "It would all be there but it would all be screwed up," his mother remembers. "He would sit and cry and talk about getting out of school."

Brent's discouragement contributed to a diminishing self-image which his mother found rather alarming. "When he was little he wanted to be a brain surgeon, then later on he wanted to be an orthodontist, now he wants to be a truck driver." Brent would tell anyone who asked that he did not expect to finish high school.

His mother was having difficulty even getting a copy of his IEP by this time. Senator Mathis's notes indicate that Brent's mother again got in touch with Child Find with concern about the school's inability or unwillingness to update the IEP as required by law and to involve her in decision-making. Senator Mathis's notes indicate that calls were made to both the junior and senior high schools involved to try to track down the IEP, but with no success. In June, 1980, Brent's mother attended a "504 Consumer's Workshop" put on by Barrier-Free Environment at a local motel. "It changed me," she said. "I know the law now, I have the regs, and I know my rights."

Later, in the fall of 1980, she wrote a letter to Closer Look in Washington, D. C., an organization run by the Parents Campaign for Handicapped Children and Youth. Closer Look, funded under authority of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, began 12 years ago to provide computer printouts of non-public school services available to handicapped youth. "But the letters from parents were so complex, so desperate, so needy," says Barbara Scheiber, the director, herself the parent of an LD youth, "that we had to develop something to help parents learn how to take action, get the services they had to have." The organization now styles itself a "national information center for the parents of handicapped children." Brent's mother's letter promptly brought a packet of information. "It gave me the first comprehensive understanding that I had about the IEP," she said.

In November of 1980, still unable to get an up-to-date IEP for her son, Brent's mother wrote letters to local school officials maintaining, in effect, that they were operating in violation of the law and demanding to see Brent's IEP. The letters elicited a prompt response. "I was told that I would get an IEP within ten days and that if I signed it, Brent would get a second special education teacher."

In January, 1981, the Office of Special Education in Washington did a compliance audit focusing on Public Law 94-142 and Section 504 in the Charlotte school system. Everybody seems to agree that the individual who headed the audit team was extremely knowledgeable, and that the audit proved helpful to the school system in overcoming certain areas of non-compliance.

The timing of the audit, insofar as Brent's situation was concerned, apparently was coincidental. Nonetheless, shortly afterwards -- having received and signed her son's IEP -- Brent's mother was told that he would have a second special education teacher, one of several newly made available to his high school.

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> Let's face it. Everything at the school is geared for the faster, smarter kids, and I'm not one of them." Darlene

Darlene's mother calls her "our little miracle baby." Darlene wasn't supposed to live through her first year. Born with spinal bifida and hydrocephalus, she underwent a series of major operations in her infancy. In addition to the hospitalization and medical treatments, her condition required a good deal of watchfulness and special care on the part of her parents. The kinds of accidents and illnesses that would have no serious effects for most children might have proved fatal for Darlene. "We had to be extremely careful," her mother says, "to make sure she didn't hurt herself, especially when she was recovering from her operations. It was hard on all of us, our two older children in particular. And maybe we did spoil her a little. But she was

> always very, very special... School has always been difficult for Darlene. She has a hard time studying and working on her own. And she has always wanted so badly to be accepted but she has a hard time making friends. From the beginning, she always felt different from the other children, but it got worse when she got into junior high school -- children that age can be really cruel. Darlene is only four foot seven inches tall, you know. The other children pick on her and she can't really defend herself. One time she came home crying because some boys had picked her up and stuffed her in a garbage can."

Darlene eventually was designated "learning disabled" too and, although her situation was far different from Brent's -- she was multiply disabled with obvious physical handicaps -- her problem was much the same. The schools had neither the means to diagnose her educational problem nor the resources to deal with it effectively. For Darlene, as for Brent, help was a long time coming.

In order to receive specialized instruction and educational services from local school systems in the state of Washington, as elsewhere, handicapped students must be accepted into special education programs. While physical, mental, and behavioral symptoms and conditions are all considered, the assessment is essentially academic. The students must be demonstrating (or judged prone to) chronic deficiencies in academic performance. Then their disability must fit into a defined category of handicap.

When Darlene entered the Seattle school system in 1968, she was a year older than most of her classmates but by far the smallest child in the class. She was different in other ways as well; she had a shunt embedded in her scalp to drain the water from her head, and her hair, which had been shaved for her final operation, had not yet grown out. She was not allowed to participate in sports or active games -- that suited her, as she was as frightened by as attracted to the other students; she had been allowed to play at home only with her brother and sister and a few older children who could be trusted to look out for her.

But, despite the social isolation such treatment implied, and despite difficulties making friends and getting along with the other children, Darlene learned to read and write and got through grammar school without serious academic problems.

As they so often do, things got more difficult in junior high school. Darlene felt the lack of social acceptance more keenly. At the same time, academic demands and expectations were increasing and her teachers no longer seemed as supportive or as willing to make allowances. Her grades began to slip and she complained about the "pressure" her teachers were putting on her. Her parents thought she was probably just going through a difficult stage, but they became seriously concerned when one of her teachers suggested that Darlene was a particularly "slow learner."

Her mother scheduled conferences with Darlene's teachers. Some of them agreed that Darlene was "slow;" others felt that her problem was laziness or a poor attitude. Tests were given and it was determined that Darlene was of normal intelligence, not dyslexic, had a particularly large vocabulary, and a reading and comprehension ability close to normal grade level for her age. A neurosurgeon, consulted at the instance of the family, told Darlene's mother that it was not unusual for hydrocephalics and other children whose condition in early childhood had required intensive medical care and family attention to "work harder at getting out of work and avoid tackling difficult problems on their own." School authorities suggested special tutoring and parental reinforcement of good study habits.

Darlene's mother and older brother began to work with her. They found that she would begin study sessions enthusiastically enough but would tire quickly and was easily frustrated. When under pressure to prove herself, she tended to freeze. On many occasions after studying at home for several hours the night before a test, she would panic and be unable to recall information or respond to examination questions in class the next day. Her self-image darkened. "Let's face it," she told her mother, "everything at school is geared for the faster, smarter kids, and I'm not one of them." She claimed that she didn't care whether she got good grades and avoided studying altogether unless her mother or brother was willing to help her. Her pattern of headaches and other minor illnesses continued, and her absences from school became more frequent.

Schools are busy places, with multiple demands on the attention of teachers. Despite all the warning signals, despite slipping farther and farther behind her school cohort, Darlene had not yet reached the point where something would have to be done. She managed to complete junior high school and got through her first year of high school by taking the fewest credits allowed and the easiest courses available under the least demanding teachers. She managed to pass most classes with "C's" and "D's," and those she failed, she would make up in summer school.

But in her junior year, she found classes becoming more difficult. During her first semester, she flunked Spanish, English, and American

History. Her mother was notified by school authorities, then, that Darlene was eligible for assessment and possible enrollment in the Special Education Program.

Darlene was not the only child who came to special education assessment sadly late in the day. Teachers and counselors at her school in Seattle -- echoing the opinion of many others across the country -- report that Special Education definitions and criteria are both too restrictive and too vague to encompass the circumstances and needs of all handicapped youth. Many students -- particularly those with physical disabilities -- who could benefit from specialized instruction and services are ineligible for Special Education because their academic performance has not yet slipped sufficiently below standard. Criteria aimed at focusing limited resources on the most academically deficient consequently encourage delayed identification and treatment.

Kathy Haring, who was to become Darlene's instructor and counselor in the Special Education Program, says: "Darlene was picked up for an assessment primarily because of her erratic attendance. She had been having both attendance and academic problems for years, and she probably should have been picked up sooner. Unfortunately that sort of thing happens a lot." Darlene was classified as a Learning Disabled (LD) student.

At that, the school's criteria for admission to special education classes had to be bent to admit Darlene. Haring says: "We use the Horn formula to assess and classify learning disabled students, but we do not really have the resources or psychological expertise to make a detailed diagnosis or to develop individualized programs or therapy." The Horn formula requires that the student be functioning academically three years behind grade level. Darlene was not in strict compliance as she was reading at the 10th grade level, and Haring felt that her problem was more a behavioral one -- lack of motivation, non-compliance, and refusal to work at the level of her ability.

Darlene's IEP called for special concentration on improving attendance and completing assigned work on time. She was also enrolled in two special education classes, English and Career Development. Darlene was pleased to discover that these classes were less structured and slower-paced than the regular high school classes, and class size was much smaller, providing opportunity for individual attention. Her parents were hopeful that Darlene at last would be getting the special attention and help she needed.

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Brent's special education teachers wondered how much of his problem was "behavioral" as well. Physical and mental handicaps tend to breed motivational and attitudinal problems. Sometimes the best-intentioned parental reaction merely exacerbates the problem. Peer rejection or ridicule in school can cause mental hardships further complicating diagnosis. It is rarely easy to determine the "least restrictive environment" for educating a youth with single or multiple handicaps even after the disability has fully caught the attention of parents and school officials.

The audit of Charlotte's schools late in 1980 was coincidental to Brent's improved situation so far as special education was concerned, as noted earlier. But it did touch off an exchange between advocates for handicapped youth and public school officials responsible for the education of handicapped youth that is instructive because it focuses on the issues that continue to resist easy or even fully satisfactory answers.

One step in the audit process had been a telephone call from the Office of Special Education in Washington to the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities. That body had been created by the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1979, merging one council whose primary responsibility had been public relations with another that had investigative rights. Thus, the new council would be responsible, in addition to advocacy, for the pursuit of "legal, administrative or other appropriate remedies to insure the protection of the rights"[19] of handicapped persons receiving state or local services.

Lockhart Follin-Mace, the director of the council, recalls that the telephone call in November 1980 was to announce the monitoring visits and to request that the council pinpoint specific problem areas and also provide a list of people who might be interested in attending a meeting to discuss these concerns.

A letter was written to OSE calling attention to problem areas. A copy was sent to State Superintendent of Schools Craig Phillips, who passed it down to the office of Ted Drain, director of the Division of Exceptional Children of the State Department of Public Instruction, for an answer.

While the ensuing correspondence dealt with a variety of matters including the question of educational services for children being treated in private or out-of-state psychiatric facilities, termination of services to children in residential schools, cut-off of services at age 18, and full-year schooling, the two issues that are most central to the national debate were parental involvement in placement decisions and the "least restrictive environment" issue.

The Council's letter suggested that parental participation in the IEP could be limited under state law to approval by the parent after the IEP placement determination is made. "In our opinion," the Council wrote, "the decision on placement is extremely important. It should be determined in conjunction with the IEP development, with parental participation." (Council's emphasis.) In his letter response, Drain termed this description of state law incorrect and quoted from State Board of Education Rules to the effect that "the parent is involved in the evaluation process from the time the school system asks for permission to test to final placement."

All the same, Brent's case underscores the implications of the best available national data quoted previously. There is an apparent sizable gap between the kind of parental involvement envisioned in 94-142, however supported by state rules, and what actually happens in schools around the country.

The gap becomes even more important when the issue of "least restrictive environment" is raised. Should a handicapped youth be placed in a "segregated" or separate educational/training environment with other youths with similar handicaps? Or should he be "mainstreamed" into regular classrooms with non-handicapped youths? Which of these two, or other, options, is the "least restrictive environment" for the child in question?

The Council's letter went to the matter of monitoring decisions on appropriate placement of children in "segregated" schools. "Presently, many children are inappropriately placed..." the letter noted. "The 'least restrictive environment' mandate of federal regulations is repeated in state regulations, but there is no enforcement or monitoring of this mandate by DPI."

The Council elaborated on this statement, underscoring its main concern, in a second letter to OE and Dr. Phillips. It stated that possibly as many as one-quarter of the LEAs (Local Education Agencies) in the state had separate school facilities for handicapped youth. It cited instances where mildly retarded youths were put in such facilities and charged that some such facilities were physically inferior to regular schools and that others had proportionately fewer therapists than their populations called for. "The state should also strictly monitor LEAs using segregated schools to insure that the children placed in these schools receive the services they would receive if they were integrated throughout the school system," the Council's letter stated.

Drain's office responded that the State Department of Public Instruction does monitor the placement process and provides follow-up to make sure corrections have been made. "We do not require school systems to discontinue all centralized programs, and we do not plan to require such action," the letter added. "We do plan to continue helping local school systems determine the appropriate placements and services for their exceptional children."

The language in these two letters goes to the heart of a frequent point of disagreement between advocacy groups and educators dealing with handicapped students. Referring to the Metro Center in Charlotte, a separate school and training facility for severely handicapped youth, Drain said in an interview: "Some folks would dismantle that kind of facility and put the children in self-contained classrooms in the school system. We totally disagree with such decisions being made from outside. We think it is a matter of the school board deciding this on the basis of the IEP, which gives the parents their rights in the matter."

Ms. Follin-Mace says she doesn't feel that the Council is interested in dismantling facilities. "We're interested in seeing a good job done of making determinations as to which children need to be in special facilities and in seeing that they get service... We're also interested in seeing that every child who can function in a regular classroom gets that chance."

The issue is one that does not yield to generalization. Few advocates would argue that some severely handicapped youth do not profit from being educated and trained under special circumstances and with others similarly handicapped. The fear that the advocate community has is that once schools, or even classes, are established on a separate basis, they can become dumping grounds for youths who are inappropriately placed there. Even at its best, advocates argue, this exclusive treatment of the handicapped does just that -- it excludes the children from normal intercourse with peers who are like them in all ways except one. Hence, the pejorative adjective "segregated" is often used by advocates to describe "separate" classes and schools.

Some advocates and professionals see a minus side to mainstreaming, however. Ronnie Gordon, associate professor of rehabilitation medicine and director of preschool infant developmental programs at New York University Medical Center, is one. "Unfortunately, many handicapped children have been placed in classroom situations that they could not handle," she observes. "I am not opposed to mainstreaming, but I think it has to be sensitively evaluated. (It) seems to work if the class comprises 20 to 30 percent handicapped. With one or two handicapped children, there is a tendency of the handicapped and their parents to be isolated."[20]

But the word "isolated" crops up just as often in the arguments of those who wish to see mainstreaming extended to the limits of good reason. As a mother of a handicapped youth, Closer Look's Barbara Scheiber reflects on her reason for favoring mainstreaming. "So many children are isolated and walls get built around them. My son simply lost all sense of progress and possibility. He was passive with aggressive, acting-out problem children in a special class with him. Instead of learning, he was giving up. The day he was accepted in a regular program, he began to change."

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> "Harold was particularly hard to work with, because he was so distrustful and withdrawn... He wouldn't talk to me at all." Dave McNelly, Harold's special education teacher.

When Harold got out of a state hospital in Southwestern Washington State, where he had been diagnosed as schizophrenic, he landed in a Seattle high school special education class that might have served as a model for separate but unequal. The class was made up of 26 students, including several with a history of psychiatric disabilities similar to Harold's, a handful of mentally retarded students, and a larger (and more obstreperous) group of youngsters with school behavior or adjustment problems. Two instructors -- well below the advised instructor-student ratio for a class like this -- were in charge. Indeed, the only thing Harold had going for him was McNelly.

The youngest of 12 children, Harold had received a good deal of bossing and bullying from older siblings, who frequently resorted to verbal abuse and physical intimidation. He had been the particular target of a disturbed older brother whose violent and erratic behavior eventually led to his commitment in a psychiatric treatment facility.

Harold was 13 at that time. Since then he had grown increasingly withdrawn and uncommunicative and during the months before his "breakdown" complained of "confusing voices" in his head. At 15, then, he was placed in the hospital, where he remained for six months. The psychiatric report which accompanied his enrollment papers in the high school indicated that he had been only partially responsive to his hospital therapy. Medication, which was continued after his release, seemed to have stabilized his condition. He was calmer and less erratic but was not considered "cured."

McNelly read the psychiatric report but found the information contained in it of limited value in helping him work effectively with Harold: "The kind of stereotypical diagnosis you find in these reports doesn't really tell you much about a person and his particular problem. Harold was particularly hard to work with because he was so distrustful and withdrawn. He was totally uncommunicative when he started the class. He wouldn't talk to me at all. But he did show up for class every day. And it didn't take me long to realize that his problems weren't academic. He sometimes had problems concentrating, but for the most part, he would take assignments and complete them on his own with little trouble. He obviously had a good mind and he was a hard worker. The major challenge was to draw him out and get him to relate to other people."

McNelly spent as much time as he could working with Harold on an individual basis. Harold was not willing to talk much himself, but he began to respond to McNelly's relaxed and unself-conscious blend of humor and concern. "Harold was extremely self-conscious and afraid that people would ridicule or laugh at him. So I would 'act out' a little -- play the fool -- and get him laughing at me," McNelly said. The behavior of the other students in the class did not make things easier. "It was a pretty wild and noisy bunch of kids," McNelly said. "Harold would just get to the point where he was speaking, starting to reach out a little. Then one of the class cutups would jump on him for something and start giving him a hard time, and Harold would deflate like a balloon and just withdraw again."

As the school year continued, McNelly began to notice that Harold's ability to concentrate and communicate, while generally improving, would also fluctuate in unpredictable cycles. "He would go along for several days or even weeks concentrating well and doing his assignments relatively quickly, speaking out a little more each day, and then suddenly he seemed to have a lapse, where he was really disoriented and depressed and couldn't seem to get anything done."

McNelly suspected that these periodic "lapses" were connected with the heavy medication that Harold was receiving but he was unable to communicate with Harold's parents on this point. Harold's father was busy making a living to support his institutionalized son, and Harold, and the three other children who were still at home. Harold's mother worried about him but she was never able to understand his condition and tended to place complete confidence in the decision of a private physician, who had seen the family through a series of crises. When the family indicated that Harold was "having a hard time," the physician usually responded by temporarily increasing Harold's dosage of medication. While this treatment would alleviate certain symptoms, McNelly felt that it also slowed Harold down and heightened his tendency to withdraw.

Despite periodic setbacks, Harold made both academic and social progress during the school year. By spring, 1978, he was reading with good comprehension at the 11th grade level. More importantly, he was speaking coherently in class and even initiating conversations on his own with some of his classmates. When the school year ended in June, Harold surprised McNelly and the rest of the class by announcing that he had found a summer job for himself.

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> "Being deaf, someone said, is like sitting on one side of a sound-proof glass door listening to someone on the other side speak Japanese." Billy's foster mother.

Harold landed in a special education class; Billy landed in a special school for the deaf. His foster father saw a good deal of benefit to that, at least for the time being.

Billy's upbringing is something of a mystery to his foster parents. They have never seen his mother, although she had visits with her son regularly, almost every month, for a while. They met his father -- a Lumbee Indian from Robeson County, North Carolina -- only once, in a court proceeding instituted by the state to look into how Billy was progressing. They do know that for one reason or another Billy didn't go to school until he was nine years old.

"It's very difficult to teach a deaf child to talk when you begin that late," says Gary Beene, head of the Council for the Hearing Impaired of the Charlotte Community Service Center. "Communication with Billy is never going to be easy... He may seem slow... Yet there is something to the old saw that you can see a person by looking into his eyes. I see something there, something more than shows up in his attempts at communication."

Billy had been in a foster home before he came to his present foster parents, and they had taken care of children before Billy. They have two of their own, but see themselves as a helping family. Billy's foster mother picked up signing for the deaf in a course at the local community college and then called social service to see if they could not help a deaf child. Three weeks later, with one day's notice, they had Marcia, a 13-year-old deaf girl. "She was a beautiful child," says Billy's foster mother. "She was ambitious and she would go through difficulties to learn. She turned out to be a pivotal experience for us."

At the time, Marcia had been taken out of her natural home for a complex of reasons. When it was possible for her to return, her foster parents gave her up. Then they had, for a while, an 11-year-old with 60 percent hearing loss and a two-month baby who later went back to its parents. Then, in 1978, there was Billy, 14 years old and very much in need.

"When he came to us, his eyes were yellow and his teeth had never been brushed," his foster mother recalls. Billy was in a school for the deaf in another part of the state and his foster parents elected to keep him there for a while. They visited him -- and were able to see Marcia, who also was there -- and he came home on holidays and for vacation, just like any other boarding school student.

"There were some distinct advantages to that school," Billy's foster father recalled. "I think the vocational program there is stronger than in most public schools and it definitely begins earlier. Then they have teachers there who are familiar with the problems of deaf children, and that's a plus."

But for all of the "pluses," the family began to see some minuses as Billy entered his second year with them. His foster parents began to conceive the idea that the school for the deaf had given up on Billy as a young man with an independent future. "They've figured out up there that he will never be able to take care of himself. It's understandable, maybe, but there it is. We're getting the feeling that he is being stereotyped, that he's being taught to live in a group home... They seem to be training him to live in a non-hearing world, a sheltered world."

In Charlotte, where Billy's foster parents live, the school system is organized to handle handicapped youth largely on a mainstreamed basis, but certain schools tend to handle certain specific handicapping problems, with responsibility to integrate these handicapped youth as much as possible with the other students. The junior high school where most deaf youth are enrolled has a good reputation and Jimmy's foster parents decided, when he was 16, to take him out of the school for the deaf and enroll him there.

"We had had him for a year and three-quarters and he was still a visitor in our home," Billy's foster mother offered by way of additional explanation. "We want him in the family fully; that's the only way we know to do parenting."

In September, 1980, Billy was enrolled in junior high school in Charlotte. On the second day in school he was told that he would be put in the seventh grade and he immediately wanted to go back to the school for the deaf. The school reconsidered and placed him in the eighth grade, where he learned that the life of a student in regular school was hard, indeed. "He just plain can't read," his foster mother said. But for all of the difficulties he was having, Billy was obviously glad to be part of the family and going to school with hearing children.

"He'll have to try to be vocal anyway," his foster father observed. "He's going to have to learn to live in a vocal world. Might as well get started now... They expect more of him in this school than they did in the school for the deaf."

Indeed, expectations soon proved to be a bit higher than Billy could satisfy without some extra help. In an IEP hearing early in 1981, Billy's foster father was told that his son's speech was "below minimal" and that the boy ought to be getting three hours of speech a week instead of one. The ensuing dialogue is inexact, but generally Billy's foster father recalls it as going this way:

O.K. -- Billy's foster father said -- then give him three hours a week.

Ah. But we can only do that by taking help away from some other students who need to work with their speech although they are not otherwise handicapped.

Oh. Well, I wouldn't feel right about that...

Oh yes, please do insist, complain, and get what Billy needs, otherwise we'll never get any more resources to deal with the problems we have in school.

This is how Billy got two tutors at $8 each per hour. They are both deaf people and Billy admired them and began learning from them right away. Privately, his foster father confessed a concern. "If every handicapped kid in every school got four hours of tutoring at $8 an hour every week, it would break the bank. Who would pay for all of that?"

* * * * *

It is a fact that the "least restricted environment" is defined as much by the dollars available as it is by any factor of evaluation. Brent and Darlene were moved into the mainstream of school life, eventually with special help; Harold was placed in a separate special class; Billy was moved from a special school to a regular school with special help -- the evaluations upon which these decisions were made were based to one degree or another on what kinds of services were available, how much money was available, and how much pressure was applied by parents to gain special help for their children.

"I think that what has happened is that a lot of children are being placed in mainstream settings because of the limited dollars to serve them and for no other reason than that," says Ted Drain. "The federal government has not lived up to its mandate to provide money and the states lack the funds as well... We are funding more handicapped children and loading them into an already squeezed system. We are underserving them."

No question that the money promised by the congressional drafters of Public Law 94-142 simply has not been appropriated. Under the law, grants are authorized to the states according to the average per-pupil cost of instruction times the number of handicapped students served by the states. The federal contribution was to be equal to 5 percent of that amount the first year after the Act passed, and grow to 40 percent by Fiscal 1982. That has not happened. For the first couple of years appropriations were close to the authorized goal. Since then, however, the gap between authorization and appropriation has grown.

For example, the appropriation for 1979 for Public Law 94-142 was $804 million. If the fully authorized 20 percent had been approved, the sum would have been $1.2 billion. And the authorization for 1980 was $862 million. If the fully authorized 30 percent had been approved, it would have been $2.1 billion.[21/]

The money has not been forthcoming as promised. The future looks even more gloomy. At both the state and federal level financial resources are being reduced. But even if sufficient money were available, a considerable additional problem would remain to be solved. According to state-by-state projections, some 64,000 additional special education teachers were needed for the school year 1978-79, with particular need for teachers for the emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, and mentally retarded. Only 20,000 special education teachers graduate in a typical year, and the attrition rate among those already in the field is 6 percent, which translates to a loss of 14,000 teachers from the system. Simple arithmetic suggests that we are gaining at a rate of only 6,000 teachers a year at the most, and surely less, as some of these new teachers do not enter the work force.[22/]

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped report cited above concludes that as a result of the difficulty of obtaining new special education teachers, many of the teachers who teach handicapped youth are not certified in special education.

The shortage of special education teachers is not the only problem posed by the school system's assumption of responsibility for the education of all handicapped youth in the "least restrictive environment." There is a shortage of support staff (psychologists, speech therapists, etc.) as well. While numbers of support staff have been increasing, thousands more are still needed.

In a recent report analyzing this problem, the National Association of State Boards of Education concluded that there is a need to "amend teacher certification requirements in each state as needed to assure that personnel serving handicapped students receive trans-discliplinary training covering special education and vocational education."23/ In other words, set up training in such a way that teachers not certified for special education yet dealing with handicapped youth have at least some specific training in the field.

Much consideration has been given to the preparation of regular teachers to assume responsibility for handicapped youth mainstreamed into their classes. Here, special education teachers are seen as a resource for training regular teachers. One of Brent's special education teachers, Vicki Remishovsky, poses the problem here. "There are enough teachers who do have empathy with the kids... I think most teachers do. The question is when do they have time to be trained... Dedicated teachers here and elsewhere work right on through lunch time. They've got 150 papers to grade at night and they've got problem kids in their classes who need after-hours work and when are they going to do anything more?"

There has been growing pressure on institutions of higher education to provide special pre-service courses aimed at preparing regular classroom teachers to work with handicapped students. "Toward this end," reports BEH, "more than 150 different projects have been funded to deans of colleges of education to develop and field-test models for changing elementary and secondary teacher training programs so as to incorporate special education activities."24/

Obviously, this kind of help lies in the indefinite future. It is likely that for years to come this nation's school systems are going to be asked to make better use of scarce -- and in some cases increasingly scarce -- resources, both in terms of funds and skilled personnel.

There are not enough of the guarantees of Public Law 94-142 to go around. School people who care about living up to the responsibilities of the Act -- and they are in the big majority -- are forced to play crisis politics. Where complaints are forcefully presented, more often than not, the first available services are provided; where the wheel does not squeak, grease may not be applied.

The schools involved in the stories of Brent, Darlene, Harold, and Billy are not inferior schools in inferior systems. The Charlotte school system, for instance, is a model of effort compared to many others in North Carolina and elsewhere in the country. Charlotte locally puts in $2 million annually, an amount equal to that put in by the federal government, for special education. And in Charlotte, in the opinion of at least one experienced observer, Brent's high school is among the best so far as special education is concerned. Senator Mathis believes that the problem becomes explosive at the high school level. "High schools are so big. At the elementary school level you are dealing with reasonable numbers of students. At the high school level, that's not so... Parents are not the only ones on the cutting edge of things with the new laws. Teachers are too... the good ones and the not so good ones. The pressure on them and on the principals is great."

From the standpoint of parents of and advocates for handicapped youth, the high school years are particularly crucial. If these youths are not destined for college -- and many are not -- what can be done to prepare them for life and work in a competitive world when school is finished?

"Maria is a very sweet girl. When I think of Maria, I smile."
Rosie Arias, Vocational Adjustment Coordinator.

III. Teaching/Training

Life began to offer promise for Maria in her senior year in high school in San Antonio. She got on the Pep Squad, the first special education student to do that in the memory of older teachers at the school. She made the dance team and that, too, was unusual. Best of all, she was in the print shop, learning a trade, and she was good at it.

Maria is educably mentally retarded.[25/] Her mother remembers first the shock of realizing that she would need special help and, later, the realization that, with her husband gone, she would have to do it all herself. "I knew that she would need a lot of special care," she recalls. "I babied her a lot; I know that I babied her too much."

Like many other educably mentally retarded children, Maria tended to fall between the cracks so far as special and regular education was concerned. She was not accepted at first in a special school for the retarded because she was not severely retarded. Yet she tended to fall asleep in class in regular school. She spent some time in a school outside Waco that specialized in problem children, but her mother was not satisfied with the progress she made. "She would come home on holidays and it would seem that she had gone backwards, slipped back... She was afraid of being by herself. I brought her home one Christmas when she was 12 and just kept her... I decided to send her to regular school."

Maria was in special education in junior high and then in high school she was guided in the direction of the print shop. Her Vocational Adjustment Coordinator, Rosie Arias, remembers the first thoughts she had when she saw Maria. "Most MR kids end up over at __________ (another San Antonio high school). Maria apparently didn't want to go there. A bunch of kids from that school were over in the neighborhood one day and they were boys and rowdy and Maria said she would rather not go to school at all if she had to go there... I remember my first thought when I saw her... Oh, oh, they are giving me a MR and a girl at that."

Ms. Arias feels that mentally retarded girls suffer from an extra handicap in the form of extreme overprotectiveness on the part of their parents. The job of a VAC in the Texas school system is to shepherd the process of transition from school to work for special education students who are not college bound. She says that she has more trouble job-placing the girls than the boys. "For one thing," she observes, "the parents won't let the girls get enough freedom early enough. The mothers won't let them ride the bus; it's too dark in the morning, and it gets too dark early in the evening... I told one mother -- I was exasperated -- look, I don't think I can find your daughter a job where you can look out the window and see her working and watch her walk to work and walk home, all in the daylight... Also the girls can't bluff their way out of things the way the boys can... the only jobs for them are in the public and the handicapped girls seem to have a hard time with this. Also they are Mexican-American girls and have been sheltered by that culture as well. A lot of the time the only jobs for them are as maids or serving food as waitresses and sometimes their families and they don't want to do that."

Maria's mother was as overprotective as any. She marvels at what Ms. Arias was able to accomplish with Maria. "She did something with her that I never could have done. She told her that she would be all right going on a bus. She gave her the money and said to her to take the bus.

Then she described to her how to do that... I would have been afraid. I never let her take the bus. Now she rides buses all over the city and never gets lost... I know I overprotected her."

Late in 1981, looking back at a period of a little under two years since Maria had graduated, Ms. Arias reflected on the difficulties special education children had finding their way. "In the years when Maria was coming up through junior high school and even high school," she recalled, "there was little vocational education for handicapped children. Except for the printing class, you could say that she was mainstreamed with a little special education help in reading and math. She was just sitting in school, getting as much as she could out of it, not really being helped much, and not aware enough to complain."

Things are better now in the San Antonio high schools, in Ms. Arias's opinion, but we are talking, in Maria's case, of the way things were five short years ago. Maria's only real opportunity was in the print shop. A report from a teacher later described her at that time: "Maria is a little slow in understanding instructions sometimes but once she does, she has the potential to be a good worker... a loyal type person; once she commits herself, she is very dedicated to whatever task she addresses."

Ms. Arias agrees. "With Maria I felt we had a special chance. She is a very sweet girl... When I think of Maria, I smile... She didn't let the handicap take her over. She is the only special education student I ever had who got on the Pep Squad. The other girls took to her right away because she was so cordial and nice. I don't think they thought of her as specially handicapped although they knew she was a special education student."

Maria's adaptability probably had something to do with her getting vocational training in the print shop. It was not the easiest thing in the world for a special education student to get into vocational education in the average high school. Wayne Casper, VAC for a Bexar County (San Antonio) high school that deals exclusively with handicapped youth, maintains that this is because vocational education teachers in the public schools have been reluctant to take handicapped youth into their classes.

"Some of it is fear," he says. "They are afraid the kid will get hurt. They say 'I don't want to take a chance on a kid that's not smart on the type equipment we're using.' In shop, for instance. Yet we use this same equipment and surprisingly few accidents occur. We have had one in the past three years... But the real problem these teachers have is that they really don't want slow students or anyone they will have to work extra with... If they get a handicapped student, it takes more time than they've got to get him along to where he can go."

Casper argues for the special school for handicapped youth -- his school is divided into academic and vocational wings with students involving themselves in both pursuits. He says he's aware that schools like his are not the present wave. "The thrust from the federal government is mainstreaming," he says. "Very idealistic and humanistic but it doesn't always work. I think a great deal of time is spent giving stuff to a kid who is only going to the seventh grade and won't be able to use it and can't handle it. Most of these young people are not college material."

* * * * *

It is true that handicapped youth do not go to college in great numbers. A national survey in 1978 indicated that they represented only

2.6 percent of college freshmen at that time, whereas the expected prevalence rate might have been 9.6 percent.[26]

However fervently the students' families and advocates may seek to improve on this performance, the realities suggest that a high proportion of handicapped youth, including mentally handicapped youth, generally need the earliest possible exposure to prevocational education and the broadest possible opportunity to take advantage of vocational education opportunities.

Frank Bowe has suggested a model career education plan that would begin at kindergarten and go to the fifth grade with career awareness -- "for disabled children the stress must be on what people with these disabilities do, particularly on the vast range of occupations such persons have already succeeded in, so as to dispel stereotyped notions of career limitations." Then on to career orientation more narrowly attuned to what the particular child wants to do (grades 6-7), to career exploration involving exposure to tools (grades 8-9), terminology and basic skills, and finally on to career preparation (grades 10 and on), which would be specific vocational education, or higher education, or employment -- in any event, to the development of specific skills.[27]

While it is possible that such a model is in place somewhere in the nation's educational system, it is far from the usual. In fact, handicapped youth in school are engaged in the slow and often frustrating process of catching up with their more fortunate brothers and sisters when it comes to preparation for a life of work.

Figures show an increase in participation of handicapped youth in vocational education programs from 216,313 in 1972 to 400,575 in 1980 and to 554,176 in 1981.[28] Still, the numerical improvement registers a gain of handicapped involvement in vocational education of from only 1.9 percent to 3.3 percent of total involvement.

Somewhat different figures from the fall 1979 Vocational Education Civil Rights Survey tell essentially the same story. Handicapped youth were involved in vocational classes in secondary and post-secondary schools at that time at a rate of 2.92 percent of the total of all youth enrolled. Figures for involvement of handicapped youth in post-secondary vocational education programs are even lower.29/

These figures attest that something less than three handicapped youths in one hundred were being served by our vocational education system only a few years ago. Evidence of the incidence of handicaps among youth of this age group differs, as we have seen, but if the Office of Special Education's 9.5 percent expected prevalence figure is accurate, it could be that more than three times the number of handicapped youth ought to be served by vocational education than actually were being served.

There is evidence that even this level of service to handicapped youth is uneven. Two hundred and eleven of the two hundred and seventy-eight comprehensive high schools surveyed showed an incidence of handicapped enrollment in occupational preparation programs of between zero and one percent. That seems to say that, as recently as 1979, approximately 76 percent of all high schools were offering between nothing and next to nothing to handicapped youth relating to specific skills to take into the work world.

Additionally, according to the 1979 Vocational Education Civil Rights Survey, it would appear that such involvement of handicapped youth as does occur is in occupational areas which can be described either as traditionally low-paying or which are vaguely defined. The heaviest involvement of handicapped youth is in "food management," "typing," and "auto mechanics." But the number of handicapped youth in the best-served occupational area -- auto mechanics -- is barely one-third of the number in a category called "other." Some 17 percent (11,284) of the total of handicapped youth in vocational education programs are being served in an apparent "catchall" category, one that inevitably raises suspicions about its value. By contrast, only 6 percent of non-handicapped youth are in the "other" category.

The apparent failure to increase significantly participation of handicapped youth in vocational programs in recent years -- at least in terms of percentages of all youth served -- is especially puzzling in view of congressional efforts to put heavier emphasis on this goal. The Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1968 called for a higher priority for serving handicapped individuals. States were required to spend a minimum of 10 percent of the federal program dollars on services to handicapped individuals. In 1976, states were required to demonstrate that an equal amount of state and/or local funds be specifically designated for excess-cost expenditures.

Here is how that works. The Fiscal 1982 vocational education budget available for distribution on formula sharing was $612,082,728. Ten percent of that money is by law set aside for involvement of handicapped youth in vocational education. Allocation to the states and on to local education agencies of the entire vocational education budget (including the handicapped "set-aside") is by formula. Across each state, however, the vocational education money contributed by the federal government must be matched by state and local funds.

The 10 percent set-aside money must be matched categorically, as well. This money can only be used for those costs for handicapped students which are over and above what is being spent on non-handicapped students. This is known as the "excess costs" principle. For example, if a handicapped student was being mainstreamed with supportive services, the set-aside funds could be used only for the supportive services. And, then, they would have to be matched 50-50 by local-state funds.

Apparently, most of the money available for matching has been matched. Charlotte Conaway, education program specialist in the office of the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, United States Department of Education, comments: "Vocational education financial reports indicate that less than 1 percent of the total 10 percent set-aside has been allowed to lapse (unspent) in any one fiscal year."

Federal funds represent less than 10 percent of the total expenditures for vocational education. Studies, however, have shown a significantly greater reliance on federal funds for providing services to handicapped students. The national median match ratio for handicapped students is $1.32 (state and local) to $1.00 (federal). The median match for non-handicapped students, on the other hand, is $10.00 (state and local) to $1.00 (federal). "The position is," write William D. Halloran and Jane Ann Razeghi, "that handicapped students are not receiving equal benefits in terms of state and local dollars."[30]

Clearly, a heavy portion of the burden of educating and training handicapped youth has been borne by the federal government. How is it, though, that increased expenditures by the federal government have had so slight an effect on the percentage of handicapped youth in vocational education?

From several sources comes the suspicion that the expected prevalence rate of handicapped youth in secondary vocational education (9.6 percent) is a phantom figure. Many handicapped youth -- especially mentally retarded youth -- may have dropped out of school by the time they would begin to benefit from vocational education, these observers feel.

Absent a national study of this phenomenon, reliance is placed on several regional or local studies. One done in St. Paul, Minnesota, of 4,500 students aged 16 and over who left the schools during the period from September 1, 1974, to December 31, 1977, found that 30 percent were handicapped.[31/] On the basis of that study and others, some educators think that the dropout rate for handicapped students may be five to six times higher than it is for non-handicapped students. Paul Hippolitus, employment adviser for the President's Commission on Employment of the Handicapped, has noted: "Many experts close to this field believe that this high dropout rate is due, in large measure, to the perceived irrelevance of the special education program by the special education student. In other words, many of these programs are still pounding away at academic instruction or no instruction at all when vocationally oriented instruction would be not only more interesting but more useful."[32/]

Why, then, is that vocationally oriented instruction not more often forthcoming? It already has been suggested that vocational education teachers may resist for a variety of reasons having handicapped youth -- with their special instructional problems -- assigned to classes with non-handicapped youth. Hippolitus argues that funding methodology also screens out handicapped youth. "Vocational education's accountability for funding is based on the number of successful completers it has... This accountability and the over-subscription of students for a limited number of seats motivates admissions personnel to select only the best prepared students. Since secondary special education has, in the majority of instances, not adequately prepared its students for the vocational education option, they fail to gain admission on this basis."[33]

Spokesmen for vocational education view this last observation somewhat differently. What if, they ask, the special education teachers do not build vocational education into the handicapped youths' IEPs? Are vocational education teachers supposed to "recruit" these youths for their classes despite what the IEP says?

Studies suggest the point may be well taken. The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (now the Office of Special Education) reports that the match between services proposed on the IEP and services actually delivered is close.[34] Yet another study indicated that by the time the handicapped students get to the 13-15 age level (junior high school), the nature of special education services specified in the IEPs is predominantly academic. Only 31.2 percent of the 16-21 age group of handicapped students have short-term objectives of a vocational or prevocational nature.[35]

Reality, then, is a long way from the model Frank Bowe suggests of early exposure for handicapped youth to the possibilities they have for a fulfilling work life. Perhaps ironically, the institutions that do the best job of getting quickly to the vocational needs of their students may be those that deal only with relatively severe handicaps under conditions where the "least restrictive environment" is determined to be separate school and where socialization with non-handicapped youth is not a live option.

* * * * *

> The school workroom is full of cardboard facades -- a cardboard facade soft drink machine with slots for money, brand names and insignias; a United States Post Office cardboard facade with the in-town and out-of-town slots and a place for bulk mail; a bank cardboard facade with deposit slips for checking and savings accounts on a table, and a teller's window cardboard facade nearby. The teacher is helping a stout young woman deal with the problem of presenting a check to the bank for deposit in her checking account. Where would this check be signed -- "endorsed, is what we call it" -- and how would the deposit slip be made out? What is the purpose of an account number? What would the customer expect to receive from the teller in return for giving her the check for deposit? And where would the customer put that receipt?... The process moves along at a painfully slow pace, with the young woman saying, frequently, "I dunno," and the teacher responding, "I don't know is too easy," and prompting her charge with another question. How would she sign her name on the reverse side of the check? Would she sign it differently from the way it appeared on the front side? A slow, broad smile spreads over the student's face. "No." Would she sign it (endorse it) before she got to the bank, maybe while she was riding the [illegible]? Again the smile, the head shaken negatively, slowly from one side to the other. "No." But the student cannot identify the amount of money for which the check has been made out. Repeated efforts fail here. "I dunno," the young woman says, at last a little sadly it seems. Perhaps it is the presence of the visitor, the visitor asks? "No," the teacher says on the way back to the front office, "that is about the level of her performance right now... that's what she can do and what she can't do... she's able to read 'EXIT' signs, things like that, but that's all." The young woman has recently had her 20th birthday.

The history of public education for the trainably mentally retarded in this country is not a long one. Before 1953, in a reasonably typical city like Charlotte, there was no public education for this group of more severely retarded youth. In that year six parents with the assistance of the school system's director of special education managed to form a class at an orphanage where they paid $900 each for their children to attend. It was not until 1957 that classes for the trainably retarded actually were held in a school building, and it was the next year before teachers were placed under the authority of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board.

So in a sense the Charlotte Metro Center is a model of the guilty speed with which the nation has moved to bring its mentally retarded young people out from behind the walls of their parents' homes. Located in a modern building in a downtown redevelopment area directly across from the main city-county education building, the Metro Center handles around 360 students a year and tries to steer as many of them toward competitive as toward sheltered employment.

All of the youths in the Metro Center are in the trainably mentally retarded range (generally with IQs of 55 or lower), and some of them have additional problems such as orthopedic, sight, or hearing impairments. They are identified as Metro Center students by the same school procedure (IEP) used to identify handicapped youth elsewhere in the system. They stay until they are ready to "graduate" -- which means they are ready for some kind of work or other -- or until they are 21. "When they do graduate," says Director Dick Blackman, "they go out with a cap and gown same as any other high school graduate."

They are not the same as any other high school graduate, though. While the Center may send 17 graduates to competitive employment and the same number to sheltered employment, some of the former inevitably slip back into the latter category, and some even find it too difficult outside and return to the Center, which they can do until they are 21. Blackman was working with a 15-year-old with a 15-25 IQ in a wheelchair. "What we're trying to do is to teach him to comply and conform... We've taught him a color but that took forty-five minutes... We hope that some of these kids will eventually do Sheltered Workshop kinds of things for employment. The educable mentally retarded can reach maybe two-thirds of normal while these kids can reach maybe one-third. We have a great need to start early."

At age 11, the Metro Center youths begin to get infusions of social skills and work skills. These latter efforts are increased until the youths are working a half-day. The 11-14 age group gets occupational therapy, development of good work habits, cognitive sequencing. The 15-17 year olds are put into workshops with skills concentrations -- carpentry, auto mechanics, manufacturing, or custodial.

Here, vocational education is more stressed than is academics. "Reading skills are great," Blackman says, "if you can reach the third or fourth grade level, but most of these kids can't and won't do that." At the same time, he notes, it is crucial to prepare all of these young people for hoped-for competitive work, "which involves a certain amount of independence and a lot of coping skills."

It is these "coping skills" that teacher Jan Hargrove, a special education graduate of East Carolina University who has been with Metro Center five years, was trying to impart to the 20-year-old student in the workshop on using a bank. What will that young woman's future be? "She has a sister in the Nevins Center (a sheltered workshop in Charlotte) and I think she'll be going there pretty soon."

Optimally, is a sheltered workshop the inevitable first-and-last step for a trainably mentally retarded individual? "Well," Blackman says, "as I've said, it's a goal for some of these kids, but no, I don't think there are any artificial barriers to eventual employment. I'm convinced that we can teach almost any student here almost anything. There are limits on our time and expertise and... well, there are the same limits everywhere."

Between Maria's traditional high school and special and separate facilities like the Metro Center, handicapped youth are being educated in a great variety of settings. More and more, public schools with the responsibility for finding the "least restrictive environment" for handicapped youth have turned to shared-time arrangements with facilities having some special expertise working with this population -- especially with the mentally retarded.

In the essentially rural counties of Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax, and in the town of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, such an arrangement exists between the public schools and an outstanding sheltered workshop, Tri-Counties Industries. The three school systems share time in the Tri-Counties facility for a group of their mentally retarded students -- splitting morning and afternoon time between the academic offerings these special education youths get in their home schools and the job-preparation work they do at Tri-Counties.

Most of these students are juniors or seniors in high school and most are in the educably retarded IQ range, although some are TRs. The first big advantage apparent in this arrangement is that the Tri-Counties facility is a great help in doing what schools too often are simply not set up to do -- evaluating the employment potential of the handicapped youth, particularly the mentally retarded youth.

Specialist Brenda Odum describes the process of evaluating new students at the workshop as lasting four to five weeks and consisting of a listing of assets and liabilities for each student keyed to the question of whether that youth can reasonably expect to look forward to competitive or sheltered employment. The process closely involves the students' teachers from the nearby schools. "In effect, we are helping them write the IEPs for these kids," says Ms. Odum. "They really do use the information we develop."

The statement is confirmed by teachers responsible for the school life of these youngsters. One of those teachers, Linda Lockamee, director of the exceptional children's division in the Edgecombe County system, goes beyond that in discussing the collaborative program with Tri-Counties. "Yes, we use this work in developing IEPs for these children. After working with them, we are using all of the information developed and you bet it is a help. But the biggest help is the training these young people are getting. We get $15,000, maybe $16,000 in basic funds for handicapped youth each year. There's no way we can hire a full-time teacher for each of our high schools -- which we would need to do the job right -- on that kind of money."

Instead, the schools use state and local funds to write a contract with Tri-Counties for training, and the youths get exposure to direct skill training -- the workshop has wood and metal shops, assembly centers for making container and leather goods, etc. -- and a job readiness program that features visits to industry, instruction in filling out job applications, and videotaped dry runs on applying for a job. Tri-Counties also has a job placement component and follows up on its placements for three months.

The office of director Cheston V. Mottershead, Jr., a disabled veteran, displays a legend under a painting of a butterfly pupa in a chrysalis: "You can fly, but the cocoon has to go." Mottershead served as North Carolina chairman for the 1981 International Year of the Disabled and is a leading advocate for handicapped youth. He sees the pay earned by high school students at Tri-Counties as a crucial reinforcer. "These high school students," he says, "many of them, have been discipline problems. We have borderline IQs lumped in with EMR groups. They come out here to the Center, work, and get a paycheck. God, what a reinforcer that is... One of the strongest observations we get back from the schools is that they are not discipline problems when they come back. They really appreciate the work and see results from it."

Average pay for the students involved in the program is $1.02 an hour, earned on a piecework basis and enough to provide motivation to complete school and get into full-time employment. Ms. Lockamee stresses that the students are given credit for time spent at Tri-Counties and that most in that program do graduate from high school, some of them with diplomas earned or through passing the state's competency test for graduation, but most with certificates which indicate graduation without having passed full diploma requirements. "When they graduate," Ms. Lockamee says, "they go on on-the-job training if they are ready for that. If they are not, they continue at Tri-Counties with Vocational Rehabilitation funds."

The Tri-County Industries program is a shared-time program falling somewhere between what is done exclusively in the high school and what is done in centers for handicapped youth such as the Metro Center in Charlotte. Yet another model is the essentially vocational school that mainstreams handicapped youth among its majority non-handicapped population. Such a school is the Genesee Skill Center in Flint, Michigan.

There, a small percentage (10 percent) of physically and mentally handicapped youth are involved in two-year vocational education programs with high as well as low achievers. "Some of our kids take architectural drawing and go on to the Institute of Technology," says placement officer John P. Tylawski. "Then there is a pre-nursing program leading to a LPN, credit here and then finish at the community college."

But most of the youths at the Skill Center are there because they were under-achieving in regular high school. Tylawski repeats the oft-recited complaint of special vocational school officials that some youths who simply did not fit into the public school are "dumped" on them. But the heavy proportion of students at the Center are not in the "special needs" category -- in 1979-1980 there were 214 special-needs students at the Center out of a total of approximately 2,400. And of the special-needs students -- a category including disadvantaged students -- only 78 were either physically, mentally, or emotionally handicapped.

The Center's job placement record is an enviable one. Overall placement for 1979-80 was reported at 76 percent of the full class of 870, for example, with 17 percent of the entire group moving on to college. Of the special-needs graduates, according to a separate study done for the Center, 69 percent went on to employment or continuing education. No breakdown was done in this study, however, of how the handicapped students fared as a group distinct from those with other special needs.

Center Principal Richard Loomis says that the Center had considerably more handicapped youth in the past, when the center was running special, separate classes for handicapped youth. Many of the Center's students share time between their regular school and the Center, but the number of handicapped students at the Center has been decreasing, mainly because of funding cutbacks.

Neither Tylawski nor Loomis is persuaded that mainstreaming special-needs students with others is a particularly good idea, though the Center has been doing it since 1974. Tylawski argues that when the programs for special-needs youths were separated, it was easier to hire teachers who had skills with that population. "Some instructors now are reluctant to take special-needs students because they feel they would have to redesign their courses."

Loomis looks back on the days of separate classes for special students with ambivalence. "I can't prove that we did better the old way but I can't prove we didn't either... We had a class for them (special-needs students) between 2:45 and 4 p.m. and we were accused of class segregation, yet I think that some of those old, special programs were more effective than a lot of the mainstreaming we are doing now... It takes a special kind of teacher to teach handicapped kids. Take that boy, Mickey, you're interested in who was in John Stengel's class... that's basically a segregated class. We don't have another teacher in the building who can do what John does..."

* * * * *

"People who stare are handicapped too..." Mickey

> The boy is learning to walk again. He is 16. He learned to walk once before when he was six. He learned to walk back then because his mother refused to buy him a wheelchair as some friends and even some medical people advised. The doctor who treated the boy in his early years told his parents that he would never walk but they did not believe him. His mother carried the boy on her back for the first six years and once when she was in a store a man said 'Lady, that boy's so big he should be carrying you.' Learning to walk once was hard enough but now he is 16 and he has broken his ankle and he has to learn all over again. He falls down and gets up, pulling himself over on his knees and forcing his upper body up by the strength of his arms. He takes a tottering step or two and stumbles and falls again. Sweat pours off him. His father, who has let him learn to do for himself all of his life, cannot watch any longer. He turns away. But the boy somehow gets up again...

Mickey was born with spastic cerebral palsy, quite heavily speech-impaired, and with the mobility and coordination problems associated with the condition. It was clear that he would need extensive speech therapy and special education -- what wasn't so clear was that he would be able to function even with the best of help.

But he did learn to walk and he learned how to talk and made his way through special education classes in elementary and junior high school. His parents, both veteran General Motors employees in Flint, Michigan, decided early that the key to Mickey's progress in the world was his developing a keen sense of independence and self-reliance. They started him on tricycles and worked up to six-wheelers that go in snow and water, a mini-bike, a 10-speed, a snowmobile. They taught Mickey how to swim and when he was old enough his father began to teach him how to drive. By the time he got to driver's education classes in high school, he had the background to become a prize pupil.

"When we realized we had a handicapped son, we decided to spend a lot of time together," Mickey's father says. I think parents of handicapped kids have to have a certain drive and you hope maybe the kid gets that, picks it up, uses it. We spent a lot of time camping, fishing. We always let Mickey make his own way."

Mickey's parents also were willing to go the extra mile to get the kind of services he needed. Two years behind other youths, he needed a good deal of speech therapy. His parents sent him to the University of Michigan speech camp in Northport, Michigan, for eight weeks in the summers at a cost they could not really afford. "It helped him grow a lot," his mother says, "although he got homesick."

Somehow, Mickey always managed to find a way to make friends. He learned how to handle the teasing that is the inevitable lot of visibly handicapped children. "He learned to grin and bear it," his father says. He also learned from his parents' own teaching not to be dependent upon services from anyone else. "He's always wanted to be treated like he's just a normal kid, not like he's handicapped... he doesn't want people bending over backwards for him."

By the time he made it into high school Mickey was ready to develop the kind of peer support that is rare for handicapped youths. He became student manager of the football and basketball teams. He also was accepted at the Genesee Skill Center for vocational training.

Loomis remembers the day in 1975 when Mickey showed up at his Center. "I took one look at him the first day and observed, here's a kid who's really handicapped... He would come to school with his hair slicked down, shined up, looking great to do custodial work... Some of the kids used to tease him about dressing up but he could handle it -- he was a good one."

Stengel realized he had someone a little special in Mickey. "He had already been given terrific support by his home-school peers. Somehow at the high school they saw him as a special person... And his parents clearly had sought to make him independent, they didn't baby him.

So Mickey had some good things going for him, not excluding wha Stengel calls "a pretty active sense of humor." But he needed every bit of advantage he could get. Stengel had some doubts that with his coordination problems he would learn to handle the machinery involved in the work experience custodial placement he had in mind. Mickey fooled him on that point, however.

"We placed him in a nearby elementary school for work experience," Stengel says. It's something we rarely do with a student because it seems too much a continuation of school life and not enough the beginning of work life. But in this case the person who did the evaluation wanted to hire him and so we let it go that way. Mickey got a super evaluation."

Stengel feels that the school did a good job of preparing the students for what was going to happen. "What they did included talking about how to deal with handicapped kids. They'd tell the other students, look, there are going to be some students in here washing windows and you shouldn't tease them. Mickey got positive reinforcement and it helped him build the self-esteem he has now."

When Mickey graduated he got a standing ovation from the other students at his high school and their parents. He says it made him very proud. "But," he adds in the halting manner of one for whom speech has always been an effort, "I did wonder if I would get a job."

* * * * *

Before the passage of Public Law 94-142 -- the legislation that placed full responsibility for educating handicapped youth with the public schools -- many school systems were beginning to receive help in developing work experience sites from a knowledgeable source. In the state of Washington, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation had a cooperative agreement with the public school system from 1972 to 1978 which provided for the out-stationing of DVR counselors in high schools to work with special education and other handicapped students on a half-day basis.

With the passage of 94-142, the state DVR was directed by its federal program office to discontinue operations inside the public school system. Jurisdictional matters of a legal nature were involved in the decision, which affected many other states as well. In King County and Seattle, Washington, most high schools set about to institute some type of prevocational curriculum or work-related component for special education students based on the earlier DVR models.

Work experience is viewed by most educators and trainers as a vital part of the development of youth leading toward independent employment; this is especially true of handicapped youth, many of whom will not go on to college. Given limitations on vocational education and training resources and curricula earmarked for disabled students within the schools, outside work experience is typically the most accessible and practical vehicle for employment preparation. It is also noted frequently that special education students typically do not respond well in academic/classroom settings and instead learn faster in work-instructional settings.

Finally, work experience assignments (usually structured on a two- to six-hour, five-day-per-week basis) fill a substantial gap in the curriculum and instructional capacity of special education programs. As indicated earlier, a core group of disabled students is segregated from mainstream classes. It is also true in some states that handicapped students often remain in high school until they are 21, and in any case tend to finish high school later than their non-handicapped brothers and sisters. Most schools lack the training materials, staff, and other resources to provide intensive individualized instruction, either academic or vocational, or even to keep special education students productively occupied within the school on a full-day basis over a three- to seven-year period.

For these reasons many high schools operate their own work experience programs. In Seattle and King County, special education worksites may be in public agencies, sheltered workshops, or private sector firms. In Seattle, under the Special Education VOTIS program, special education instructors are out-stationed at private sector worksites, such as a jewelry manufacturing firm and an athletic supply warehouse, to train and supervise small work crews of special education students. Most special education students have one class period each day with a prevocational teacher. Those who are fully mainstreamed report individually for assignments linked to employment preparation. Students in self-contained special education classrooms receive vocational preparation from their regular instructor or from the prevocational teacher. After "proving themselves" in work crews or highly supervised assignments within the school facility, the students are out-stationed in public or private sector worksites in the community for three to five hours per day.

Students in special education/work experience programs in Seattle and King County receive academic credit for their job activities, but they do not get paid unless they are enrolled as Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) participants. While lack of pay may be considered a disincentive, special education staff report that most students seem to prefer work assignments to full classroom schedules. In many cases, students spend only one or two hours in school each day and the majority of their time at the worksite. Within the Seattle public schools, a number of students were identified who were working at VOTIS sites and enrolled in the special education program, although they had attended no high school classes for more than a year.

Harold was one of the "working students" in the Seattle system. Nine months out of the state hospital, and still experiencing a "buzzing" in his head, he got his first summer job. He had completed his sophomore year in the special education class at his high school, and although he would remain in the class, most of his learning experiences during the next three years would take place in a work environment rather than a classroom.

Harold's first job was at a disposal plant, washing and cleaning garbage trucks. It was dirty work and he was expected to put in a full eight hours each day. He was a hard worker and his boss offered to keep him on in the fall if he would work the graveyard shift. Harold agreed to stay on. He was bringing his paycheck home to his mother, who would deduct a certain amount for room and board and put the remainder in the bank for him.

When school started in the fall, Harold came to class in his work clothes. When Dave McNelly, Harold's special education teacher, realized that Harold was coming to school after eight hours of work each night, he arranged take-home assignments and assured Harold that he would get work/study credit for his time on the job. Harold was conscientious about completing his school assignments. He attended class three mornings a week for several months until McNelly noticed that he wasn't getting enough sleep and suggested that one to two days a week in class would be sufficient. McNelly says that his major purpose in having Harold come to class was to keep him involved in social interaction. Many of the other students in the special education class were working, and much of the class discussion revolved around experiences and problems on the job. Although he continued to have his "bad" days, Harold seemed to be doing well; he reported to the class that his boss had promoted him to driving the forklift.

A month later, Harold suddenly stopped coming to class. McNelly went to his house and learned from his mother that Harold had lost his job after being involved in an accident with the forklift. Harold was feeling pretty low. He wasn't able to give a clear account of the accident, but McNelly felt that the strong medication he was taking might have affected his physical responses and precipitated the accident. He persuaded Harold to come back to school and several weeks later was able to help him find another job doing assembly work at a packaging company.

Harold liked that job. He was working the afternoon/evening shift. When school ended in June, he planned to keep on working at that job through the summer. But McNelly ran into Harold's supervisor at the company one weekend in August at the shopping mall and he told McNelly that he had laid off Harold several weeks before: "He was real dependable about showing up and all. And most of the time he did pretty well. But he just couldn't work consistently at production speed -- so I finally had to let him go."

When school started in the fall of 1979 Harold was a senior. He was assigned once again to the special education class, but by then McNelly was no longer teaching at that high school. Harold's reading, writing, and math skills were close to 12th grade level and considerably better than those of most students in the special class. But he had no job and was bored with school. His new instructor was able to get him a special education work/study job at a kitchenware manufacturing firm that employed handicapped workers exclusively. While placements at such VOTIS workshops as this one generally were unpaid and for credit only, Harold's instructor got him on CETA so that he could receive wages. For the remainder of that school year, Harold attended classes in the mornings and worked in the afternoons. By June, he had completed requirements for a special diploma, but his instructor at the kitchenware manufacturing plant did not feel that he was ready to meet a regular production schedule. He was given a provisional diploma and allowed to be retained in the special education VOTIS program as a CETA participant.

In the fall of 1980, the kitchenware manufacturing company closed down. Harold was out of a job. He got in touch with McNelly, who was by then an instructor at an athletic supply company. McNelly was able to get Harold on at that firm as a CETA/VOTIS worker. The work included tasks such as packing, loading, sorting, stacking, and inventory indexing. Harold was the oldest "student" on that job and he had more work experience than any of the others. He was glad to be working with McNelly and it didn't take him long to catch on to the warehouse system. McNelly reports that in many ways Harold was his best worker, requiring less supervision and being generally dependable about showing up and carrying out assigned tasks to completion. Nine out of ten days, Harold was fine. But he still experienced periodic lapses, when he would become depressed, withdrawn, and unable to communicate with others or get his work done.

He was still living at home. At 19, he was extremely dependent upon his mother. She was still depositing money in the bank for him and giving him an allowance, which he usually spent at the bowling alley. He was uncomfortable with strangers, too, and dreaded even routine encounters. He avoided using public transportation, relying on his mother to drive him to and from work each day.

For all of his dependence, he was beginning to feel the urge to be more on his own. He talked about fixing up a shed in the back of his family's house so that he would have "a place of my own," and he even got around to doing a little painting and repair work on it. He and a friend dreamed of leaving Seattle -- going out on their own and seeing the world. Three months after Harold began working with the athletic supply company, he and his friend filled out applications to join the Merchant Marine. Although his conversations with McNelly over the next few weeks were filled with his ideas of life in the service, he did not seem too disappointed when he learned that both applications had been turned down.

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Many youths with handicaps find it hard, as Harold and Brent did, to break the tie with home. They are helped to do this or hampered in doing it by the attitudes of their parents. For whatever reason, being overprotected at home sets up difficulties for them when the time for a show of independence comes along. It is a fortunate youth who, like Mickey, has parents who help him confront (and join him in confronting) his real potential in the context of his handicap.

A review of dozens of letters sent to Closer Look reveals the depth of the natural and understandable concern parents have for their children's ability to deal with their handicaps. "My child... will never be normal," wrote one mother in a letter detailing the problems she already had faced in bringing up a moderately mentally retarded boy. For all the sympathy such a comment calls forth, it still tells us only something about the parent's expectations (and fears), and nothing about the child's capabilities.

Barbara Scheiber, director of Closer Look, understands the problem from the perspective of a parent of a handicapped child. She believes that the best thing that could possibly happen for handicapped youth would be a heightened awareness on the part of their parents of what is possible and what is attainable. "A network of support with a lot of really valid information -- that's one of the goals of this organization, and it should be one of the national goals if this nation is serious about helping handicapped youth. Parents should work hard to help kids develop strengths, but then realize that they are the children's strengths and that the children then have to use them... It's easy to think you're not overprotecting. But most overprotecting is simple fear compounded with ignorance. Once a parent is freed of some of this fear, it's possible then for that parent to be truly supportive."

Darlene's mother cared deeply about her "little miracle baby," but that care and concern seemed to Darlene to come out as a mothering overprotectiveness. To Darlene, her mother was "always on my back." She desperately wanted to break loose -- her older brother and sister were on their own; why couldn't she do it too? "I wanted to show that I could do something on my own," she said. "I was interested in working with the public, and I wanted to earn enough money to buy a car so I could get out on my own."

Darlene got herself a job at a donut shop in Seattle when she was 17 years old and a junior in high school. The initiative surprised her parents, but they were supportive. She was unhappy at school, failing three of her five classes. She had had a heart-to-heart talk with the donut shop manager about her physical limitations. He had told her that if she was dependable and did her best, he would not complain.

The job seemed at the time a turning point for Darlene. She worked t the donut shop for three months without missing a day, and the manager was satisfied with how she handled the job. When she was accepted into the special education program in high school in January, 1980, she was able to reduce her class schedule and receive credit for her work. With fewer classes and more individual attention, her academic performance began to improve, and with the money she earned at work, she was able to buy herself a used car and pay for her own insurance.

Her mother noticed other improvements: Darlene was happier; she complained less frequently of headaches and other minor ailments; she stopped overeating and lost some weight; she formed a friendship with a young man who worked at the donut shop and began dating for the first time.

But then the supportive manager left the donut shop and was replaced by one who immediately presented problems for Darlene. "He was always criticizing me," she said, "finding fault with everything I did. When I got sick and had to miss work, he gave me a hard time and said that I was undependable." The donut shop closed down for several weeks and the manager told Darlene he intended to bring in a new crew; she could reapply if she liked, but he couldn't make any promises. Darlene filled out an application, but the new manager told her special education teacher, Kathy Haring, that her "attitude" was a problem and that he preferred to hire older, more responsible workers who could put in a full 40-hour week.

A subsequent work experience job Haring got Darlene, in a florist's shop, lasted less than a week. Darlene walked out. "It was different from what I expected," she said. "They stuck me in the back room, cutting leaves off and twisting wires round. I wanted to be out front, working with people and stuff. But they just ignored me and acted more or less like I wasn't there."

After talking with both Darlene and her supervisor, Haring decided that a more structured and sheltered work-study placement would be better for Darlene. She had expressed an interest in secretarial work, and there was a work-study position open as a clerical aide in the school district print shop. Darlene took the job and worked four hours a day, Monday through Friday, for credit only. She was learning new skills -- operating the Xerox machine, developing plates, paper cutting, shredding and filing -- and for the rest of that school year she was excited about the job and able to get along with both her supervisors and fellow workers. When summer vacation began, she was looking forward to picking up the job the following fall.

Summer turned out to be a "total waste" as far as she was concerned. First, she missed out on the family vacation because she had to go to summer school. And, even though she was almost 18 and felt capable of being out on her own, her mother had insisted that she stay with her brother and his wife while her parents went to California for four weeks. All she had done that summer was go to school and babysit her niece and nephew. When school was over in August, she had planned to use her babysitting money to spend four days at the seashore with her cousin, but her mother decided that it was "too risky for two girls to go off all by themselves." She complained that her mother treated her like a baby. She said she couldn't wait to graduate from high school and leave home.

But when she went back to the print shop in September, things were different. A new supervisor was there and wasn't nearly as understanding or easy to talk to. She was always criticizing Darlene's work and never seemed to have anything good to say about her. Darlene complained to Haring about the criticism she was getting and argued that she ought at least to be paid so that she could save up to get a place of her own.

Haring didn't think that Darlene was trying hard enough to adjust to the new situation. But she did think that Darlene had a point about not getting paid. She discovered that Darlene's handicapped status made her eligible for the King County CETA program. She was able to get Darlene into a Youth Employment Training Program (YETP) and Darlene began to receive CETA wages for her work at the print shop. She was happy to be receiving money again but it didn't have much effect on her job situation or her performance. As far as she was concerned, her supervisor was treating her "like dirt." Her supervisor told Haring that Darlene would do the work but was either disrupting the office with arguments or being sullen and uncommunicative. Darlene began missing work frequently and her school absences increased again. When she missed several appointments with her counselor, she was terminated from the CETA program.

With the paycheck gone, Darlene decided to quit the print shop job. Haring felt that she ought to stick it out and threatened to withhold her work-study credit unless Darlene returned to the print shop and finished out the last two weeks of the term. Darlene told Haring that "my mother said I didn't have to go back there." Haring called Darlene's mother in for a conference. She had begun to feel that the girl's personality conflict and feelings that she was mistreated at work might be part of a serious emotional disorder. Haring recommended that Darlene's parents seek professional therapy for Darlene and encourage her to return to her job. Her mother agreed that Darlene "probably did have some emotional problems" but felt that other things were at stake. "Normally, I don't side with my kids against teachers," she said. "But they don't seem to understand Darlene. The situation at the print shop was just too negative. She really needs a little praise. She's one of those people who can't handle too much criticism."

Emotional problems seem to go with the territory where handicapped children -- and their parents -- are concerned. The impact of a physical or mental handicap on a child, and on those responsible for rearing that child, may be a great deal heavier than can be measured by any tests of mental or physical agility, strength, or perseverance. The total anxiety engendered by the handicap in the individual and the family can contribute to making the effects of the handicap much worse than appears on the surface.

"A vocational evaluation test, physical and mental examinations, all that can be helpful," says George D. McCoy, a rehabilitation engineer for the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, "but they are only the threshold, the introduction. We can show that a person can do a particular job, but we also have to realize that even if that person has the capacity and temperament for the job, he may not have the motivation. And that motivation may be cramped by the condition itself in ways that can't be measured."

A hemophiliac himself, McCoy knows about invisible disabilities. "Because the disease can cause sudden internal bleeding, I can't lift things or engage in the kind of physical activities others can... I will always remember the experience I had once of a fellow in a wheelchair being carried up some steps and being angry with me for not helping carry him."

But if invisible damage makes some handicaps worse than they appear, McCoy believes, the far greater social problem is that the common perception of a handicapped person focuses on his disabilities rather than his abilities. "We spend most of our time persuading employers that because an individual is in a wheelchair doesn't mean that he or she can't do the job. And because a person is mentally retarded doesn't mean that that person can't perform satisfactorily in a competitive employment situation.

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Under the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Rehabilitation Services Administration in Washington distributes funds to the states on a matching basis (states must match at least 20 percent of the funding, though many do more than that). In Fiscal 1983, a total of $954 million was distributed, according to formula, to the individual states, most of it to rehabilitation service divisions set up in the states. In some states, the money is shared with an agency specifically set up to help the blind.

As indicated earlier, with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, involvement of vocational rehabilitation services in public school ceased in many states. Ironically, the legislation which was intended as an educational and training "bill of rights" for handicapped youth resulted initially in pulling one of the principal service agencies out of the picture during crucial school years.

In other states, however, the legal questions raised about the rights and responsibilities of vocational rehabilitation in the schools after passage of P.L. 94-142 were not seen as militating withdrawal. "We thought that was a kind of overreaction," said Bob H. Philbeck, associate director of the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Philbeck believes that involvement of vocational rehabilitation in the public schools is "absolutely" necessary. "Through a variety of programs," he says, "North Carolina is on the verge of establishing job placement in the schools. Our division is in 38 school systems now. We're providing vocational evaluation and vocational planning for handicapped youths. We're definitely involved in the IEP process."

The case for this involvement is put succinctly by Lawrence A. Barber, specialist for the Vocational-Technical Education Service of the Department of Education in Michigan. "The two main elements of service for those handicapped kids not headed for college are special education and vocational education," he notes. "The only problem with this is that, generally, special education people know about handicaps but not the world of work and vocational education people know about the world of work but not about handicaps." It is the specific province of vocational rehabilitation to know about both.

With Barber as one of the principal goads, the state of Michigan has made extraordinary strides in recent years toward doing what common sense dictates ought to be done -- but what bureaucratic separatism and instincts for turf protection tend to frustrate: Bringing the expertise of all three of these services to bear on the needs of handicapped youth while they are still in school and effecting the smoothest possible transition between the education and training of these youths and the workday world that lies beyond the bounds of the school playground.

Michigan has been a leader in modern-day efforts to bring handicapped youth into the mainstream of education and training. In 1971, Michigan's Public Law 198 mandated special education for handicapped youth, calling for every such youth to have personal adjustment training, prevocational education, and vocational education up to completing high school or attaining the age of 26. At the same time that action was taken, leadership in the state department of education, vocational education, special education, and vocational rehabilitation sat down to inspect the laws applying to training handicapped youth. The result of their conferences was the Michigan Interagency Agreement.

The agreement was historic, but it didn't bring a plan for cooperation overnight. "Public education is a process of socialization," Barber says. "We had a little piece of education in 1971 and an agreement of our own volition. Then the following year it was rewritten, more sophisticated. The next year we began to talk about a delivery system. It was like the T-model Ford and we were moving toward power steering and so on. It evolved over a period of time, some of it due to an education effort, some of it happenstance, and some of it experience."

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 provided impetus to get to the hard work of implementing the law in Michigan. A joint meeting of state directors of special education and rehabilitation administrators was held in Washington late in 1977. From the recommendations of that group, a national Interagency Task Force was formed with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the United States Office of Education (OE), including the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education and the Bureau of the Handicapped (BEH), assuming cooperative leadership roles.

National wheels for cooperation at the state level were rolling. In September 1978, the Commissioner of Education published notice in the Federal Register that: "An appropriate comprehensive vocational education will be available and accessible to every handicapped person."36/ That notice preceded a joint memorandum, published two months later over the signatures of the Commissioners of Education and Rehabilitation Services, identifying the issues involved in interagency planning and programming. In February 1979, a national workshop was held to assist state representatives to identify the need and to put in place a process model for establishing interagency cooperative agreements to serve secondary students.

In many states progress ended with agreement on high; nothing was done to move policy to the action level. Michigan, however, was ready. Between April and June, 1980, a series of 10 regional meetings were held around the state. All vocational education directors, special education leaders, and rehabilitation service district supervisors attended. "Everybody was given a copy of the Michigan Interagency Agreement and walked through it," Barber recalls. Then the three component groups were separated out. "I took the Vocies and asked them what their hangups were about not doing this and they said they had none. Not one district said no."

The agreement as it finally evolved is simple enough to be detailed on two pages of ordinary-sized typing paper. Yet it cuts through many years of separatism in the three services involved and pins down funding responsibilities with admirable precision. In essence, its intent is to bring vocational rehabilitation into the school system at the level of the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a special education student, to provide for close cooperation among all three agencies during the remainder of that student's time in secondary education, and to provide a smooth transition from secondary education to work and training beyond that level, with coordination of that last step the responsibility of vocational rehabilitation.

For all of the agreement on language, it was clear to Barber and the others involved that any real breakthrough in coordination of overall services for handicapped youth would have to take place at the local level. Local school systems in Michigan, as elsewhere, have a high degree of autonomy. Additionally, several actors on the local scene would have to be included in any cooperative venture if it were to succeed. In Michigan, there are 29 community colleges providing vocational education for 1,500 to 2,000 adult handicapped individuals. There is the State Employment Service, charged with the responsibility for job placement and, more importantly, in touch with employers who have not traditionally or customarily employed individuals with handicaps. And then there is the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which in the larger communities of the state can do whatever local authorities want it to do -- within federal guidelines -- about employment training, but which had not been involved heavily with handicapped individuals in the past.

"You hear the story all the time," Barber says. "An employer will tell you about a job developer from the ES showing up at his door, followed a few minutes later by a Voc Rehab counselor, and then a special ed coordinator, all trying to get the same person or persons a job."

In Michigan, the locals were charged with coming up with a plan to try to coordinate education, training, and employment services for the handicapped. In May 1981, a survey form was sent to the 52 local interagency contact persons asking a number of questions about how collaborative planning was proceeding. Thirty-one responses were received. Sixteen of the respondents said that they had begun collaborative planning and 13 said that they had actually begun collaborative programming.

Barber's reaction was that things had gone "significantly" better than he had expected. "Our efforts are directed at implementation through suggesting, selling, and encouraging as opposed to the passage of additional legislation. I can take you into districts where for the first time special education and vocational education teachers are sitting down together to plan services for a child. I can take you into areas that have done nothing in the past and now have written agreements... What's even more interesting is that when we went out and ran training they all said 'You people at the state level don't tell us what to do.' All of a sudden we get rough drafts saying, 'Look what we did, and while you're at it, see if it's done right.'"

Barber notes that progress was made in the teeth of a worsening financial situation. "We've had a 35 percent reduction in state dollars for special education, a 35 percent reduction in state dollars for vocational education, and three straight cutbacks in the last three quarters in basic state aid... within the last 18 months, right at the point when we were trying to get these agencies to sit down together. A lot of districts backed off on account of this... We got what we got by selling it on the basis of the need for more planning to use less money with a minimum of duplication."

More collaboration in school and in the transition from school to work makes sense, particularly when resources are shrinking. But the final goal of all the planning and collaboration must be jobs for handicapped youth, whether directly out of high school or -- in some cases -- after college. Here the programs that deal directly with the employing community are of paramount importance, and the attitudes of employers toward handicapped youth are crucial.

> "There is something to that old saw that you can see a person by looking in his eyes. I see something there, more than Billy shows in his conversation."
>
> Gary Beene, director, Council
> for the Hearing Impaired

IV. Training/Working

> It is the summer of 1980. The group is standing in the lobby of what used to be a splashy motel, since converted to a home for the elderly. Billy is holding a broom in his left hand, signing with his right hand. Gary Beene and Nancy Kramer, his counselor, are signing with him and translating verbally to the third visitor. "He says he just got back from a vacation in Michigan with his dad," Beene says. "He learned to water-ski... His mom has a good job." The third visitor asks verbally... "Does he like this job...?" and Nancy Kramer signs the question. Billy hesitates, his mouth wrinkling in a kind of so-so expression. After a long minute he signs. "He says he likes it o.k.," Nancy Kramer says. "They pretty much leave him alone." Is that because, the third visitor wonders, they have nobody who can communicate with him? Gary Beene signs and speaks at the same time... "How do they... talk... with you..." He points to Billy as he speaks with him. Billy signs and no translation is needed. He is making writing motions on an invisible pad. "They write him notes," says Gary Beene.

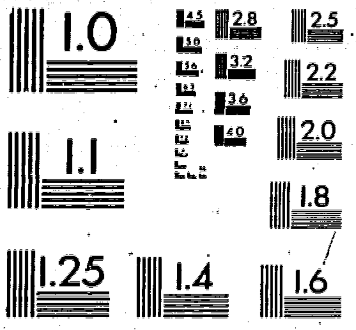
Billy, the part-Lumbee Indian youth who has been deaf from birth, was 16 years old when he got his first CETA summer job in Charlotte. He was paid by CETA to be a handyman and helper at the home for eight weeks. His supervisor said that Billy was a good worker, but it was clear that his supervisor really had made no special effort to try to get to know Billy. "With deaf people, you know, it's hard to learn much about them. He seemed like a nice enough kid but, sure, we had this communication problem."

Billy's foster parents felt that the job was not much and the supervision was not much, but that the experience was good for Billy. He had been at the school for the deaf for several years, and they worried more about his ability to function in the "real world" than about the benefits of the summer job in terms of work experience. "Sure they communicated with him by notes," his foster father said. "What else? But Billy's not going to live in a world where everybody signs -- that's the kind of world he's been living in and it's totally artificial. All it prepares you for is life in a protected, sheltered situation where everyone who has responsibilities toward you can reach you through signing. We want Billy to have to deal with the frustration of living in the real world where he -- and not everyone else -- will have to make the adjustment."

His foster mother nodded. "When we went up to see Billy at the school for the deaf it was... a strange experience. There, everybody signed, and if you can only speak, you are the disadvantaged one. It's like a world turned upside down, where hearing and not signing isolates you. It gives you the sensation deaf people must have when they are not able to communicate to anyone. Like being locked out..." That is why Billy's foster parents decided to take him out of the school for the deaf and put him in a public school in Charlotte, North Carolina, where they lived.

It takes only about two semesters in the classroom to learn how to sign sufficiently well to be an adequate communicator with the average deaf person, yet when his foster parents adopted Billy they were the only adoptive family in the county who were able to sign. "Heck, I'd say they were one of a handful of families of any kind outside the deaf community who could sign," said Nancy Kramer, Billy's counselor and a contract employee of the Council for the Hearing Impaired, an organization that functions under the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Ms. Kramer was complaining on the morning of the visit to Billy in the home for the elderly of communications problems of a different sort, between hearing individuals. She would find no problems, or nobody around to report



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

problems, as she made her twice-a-week rounds of the sites where hearing impaired youth worked in summer jobs. Then, the next morning, when she was home, she would get a frantic call from some CETA site supervisor about a problem that she could easily have dealt with had she known about it the day before. With a child of her own at home and expecting another, she was not inclined to drop everything and rush out to the scene of the "emergency." Yet that is what she was expected to do, and what she did.

On top of that, word had gotten around that the summer program would end a week early, which meant that the participants would be finished, not to be paid again, at the end of the next week. Yet nobody had notified Gary Beene officially of that, and he did not feel that he wanted to "let the CETA people off the hook" by passing along a word that might not prove to be accurate. "It's frustrating," said Kramer. "Sometimes I ask myself, 'What am I doing out here?' And sometimes I don't get a very good answer."

* * * * *

Billy's summer job was of the sort that is usually described in employment/training terminology as "work experience." Typical of most summer youth program jobs at the turn of the decade, it was intended not to set a career track but to give Billy a taste of work-life, an opportunity to see what he might like -- or not like -- to do.

In fairness to Charlotte's CETA program, Billy's taste of work-life was probably neither more nor less rewarding than in most other programs around the country. If anything was different, it was that Billy's handicap isolated him more from his superiors. Yet his foster father had accurately assessed the situation -- Billy would have to learn to deal with that problem if he had hopes of succeeding in competitive employment and living an independent life.

The record of employment of handicapped individuals in the United States is a dreary one. "An actual majority of disabled adults is not working," writes Frank Bowe.[37] "Of the 15 million disabled Americans between the ages of 16 and sixty-four who are not institutionalized, more than 7.7 million are either out of the labor force or unemployed."

Clearly, youth with handicaps need help in getting employment as they leave school if any improvement is to be made in that record. Yet with the best will in the world, the national Vocational Rehabilitation Service cannot keep up with the demand for post-secondary placement services for handicapped youth. Many close to the scene feel that there has been a tendency for the public to look for vocational rehabilitation to do that job. "The facts don't support this attitude," writes Paul Hippolitus.[38] "Every year the state-federal vocational rehabilitation program serves approximately 300,000 handicapped people nationwide. Of that number, approximately 50,000 are handicapped youth aged 16-24... When we realize that approximately 650,000 handicapped young people leave our nation's education system through graduation or termination of eligibility each year, we begin to realize that the vocational rehabilitation program is nowhere near big enough to serve our handicapped population."

If vocational rehabilitation can only handle one of seven handicapped youth in need of job placement, from where will help come for the rest? The only other national program with sufficient scope and funding to be useful has been CETA, now scheduled to be phased out this year in favor of the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982.

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1975 was passed by Congress during the Nixon Administration as an effort to bring federal social programming more nearly under state and local control. Under its forerunner, the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1964, programs for employment training were designed nationally and offered at the state and local level. CETA's intention was to decentralize this process, to provide money at the state and local level for employment and training programs designed there.

While youth were served under the major general title of CETA, it was not until 1977, with the passage of the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA), that the national employment and training effort focused on the alarming rise in youth unemployment. And it was not until 1979 that national CETA regulations were changed to help provide access to employment programs for handicapped youth. The regulation change, entered on April 3, 1979, was a significant one:

"Handicapped persons will not be required to meet an income level to be considered economically disadvantaged, provided that their handicaps present substantial barriers to employment."

Prior to that regulatory change, CETA programs dealing with handicapped individuals were, more often than not, special programs for a specific group.

In Flint, Michigan, for instance, CETA funded for two years (1977-78) a program for mentally retarded adults and youth with training for kitchen, janitorial, and outside maintenance employment, the first year through the Genesee County Association for Retarded Citizens and the second year through the school system. Placement rates for the 190 clients over two years ran at about 60 percent.

In Seattle, the King County Manpower Consortium had put on a special summer project for youth with cerebral palsy. The CP participants were provided with career information, employment orientation, and work experience. The response from participants was extremely positive and, when the summer was over, participants, parents, counselors, and supervisors all wanted to continue the project. When they learned that activities would have to be discontinued in the fall (on schedule, as funds were exhausted) participants staged a "wheel-in" in the CETA consortium administrative offices. "One of the hardest things I ever had to do was to face all those earnest and eager young people in wheelchairs and explain to them why we didn't have the money to refund their project," the consortium director said later.

The regulatory change of 1979 was intended to try to move individuals with handicaps more into the mainstream of CETA programming. Some CETA prime sponsors had maintained that they could not enroll individuals with handicaps in their programs because they did not meet economic standards of disadvantage. One CETA staff person was blunt: "The attitude around here was 'Why enroll middle-class kids with handicaps in a program intended for poor kids?'"

Advocates for handicapped individuals maintained that the income argument in many cases was merely an excuse to allow CETA personnel to avoid dealing with the problem of handicaps. For that reason, they greeted the 1979 regulatory change with hope and some expectations.

CETA has attempted to attack unemployment problems in two ways, through national demonstrations and through funneling money to the localities (cities and counties of over 100,000 population) and to the states (to be applied to remaining localities designated "balance-of-state"). By 1980, seven national contracts totaling $3.7 million for employment of handicapped individuals were being funded under Title III of CETA by the Office of

National programs. Perhaps the best known of those was run by the National Association for Retarded Citizens, headquartered in Arlington, Texas, and operating out of [illegible] field offices around the country. But while those programs were [illegible], they were demonstrations intended more to show how the job can be done than to employ any significant number of handicapped individuals.

It is to the major CETA program of distribution of funds to these states and localities that we must look to measure the act's impact on individuals, and particularly youth, with handicaps.

The major CETA program for adults (some youth included but totals not broken out for youth) has been Title I (later Title II-B). In the five years from 1978-82, total participation in that program by individuals with handicaps improved from 5.4 percent to 9.5 percent:

- 1978 -- Total participants 1,314,566; handicapped participants 70,874, or <u>5.4 percent</u>.
- 1979 -- Total participants 1,136,933; handicapped participants 74,523, or <u>6.6 percent</u>.
- 1980 -- Total participants 1,121,002; handicapped participants 94,761, or <u>8.5 percent</u>.
- 1981 -- Total participants 1,156,324; handicapped participants 93,580, or <u>8.1 percent</u>.
- 1982 -- Total participants, 832,878; handicapped participants 79,080, or <u>9.5 percent</u>.39/

As we have noted, with the passage of the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act of 1977, a substantial increase in funding for a range of new youth programs began. Between 1978 and 1981, more than $10 billion was spent on youth programs. In 1980, that ambitious effort reached its apex with the Carter Administration's proposed Youth Act of 1980, which would have added one billion dollars per year to the sum available to fight youth unemployment. That legislation, however, failed in Congress.

With all the legislation aimed at opening doors for individuals and youth with handicaps, plus the CETA legislation for youth employment, we might expect to see gains in CETA involvement of handicapped youth over the years 1978-81. And, indeed, gains were registered, as reflected in participation totals for the three biggest youth programs -- the Youth Community Conservation Improvement Program, the Summer Youth Employment Program, and the Youth Employment Training Program.

Participation by individuals with handicaps in those three programs increased dramatically from 25,635 in 1978; to 40,943 in 1979; to 70,558 in 1980 -- and to 90,152 in 1981 -- nearly a quadrupling of participation and a rise in percentage of handicapped youth to all youth in those programs of from 2.4 percent to 3.6 percent to 5.5 percent to 7.8 percent. In 1982, with total participation down, the total handicapped participation in youth programs dropped to 78,634, but the percentage of handicapped youth in these programs continued to rise -- to 8.6 percent. Some of these gains surely are the result of the April 1979 regulatory change, or at least of the additional emphasis on involvement of individuals with handicaps in CETA programs.

But despite the rapid rise in participation of the handicapped in CETA programs for youth, it must be observed that those gains are from a point of participation well below that of handicapped individuals in adult CETA programs. The 8.6 percent involvement at the end of the five years of gains brought the percentage of youth with handicaps in CETA programs above the point at which handicapped adults were at the beginning of the four years of gains, but still below the Office of Special Education's expected prevalence of handicaps in youth of 9.5 percent.

Where job placement is concerned, the picture for individuals with handicaps seems, on the surface, rather bright. Despite being only a small minority of CETA participants, handicapped adults generally compare favorably with non-handicapped insofar as job placement is concerned.

- In 1978, for instance, the CETA Title I program placed in employment 49 percent (446,900) of its total terminations (994,262), and 45 percent (22,263) of its terminations of handicapped individuals (49,560).[40]

- When placements as a percentage of terminations declined in 1980 from approximately one in two to nearer to one in three, the relationship between total placements and placements of handicapped individuals remained about the same -- 37 percent for the program as a whole and 35 percent for individuals described as handicapped.

- In 1981, the percentages had risen to 40 percent for the program as a whole while remaining at 35 percent for the handicapped.

Asking what these figures may really mean, however, is not to detract in any way from the performance of CETA job placement. That performance speaks for itself, at least so far as initial placement is concerned. But the question remains whether such a program can be expected to dig very far below the level of the "most presentable" handicapped individuals for enrollment.

At least some available statistics suggest that the process of enrollment of handicapped individuals in CETA has resulted in a severe racial bias.

- While the racial composition of the big Title II-B (formerly Title I) program in Fiscal 1980 was 47 percent white (377,891), 33 percent black

(268,221), and 20 percent Hispanic (113,093), the racial composition of handicapped individuals within that same program was <u>73 percent</u> white (47,466), 17 percent black (11,065), and 7 percent Hispanic (4,454).41/

That relative preponderance of whites in the programs for handicapped adults carries over to youth programs as well:

- In the Youth Employment and Training Program -- the predominantly in-school youth program -- in Fiscal 1980, the racial percentages for whites-blacks-Hispanics were 46-36-18. For handicapped youth in that program, however, the percentages were 71-18-11 -- again a striking white majority.

- The Youth Community Conservation Improvement Program -- mainly for out-of-school participants and generally enrolling more minorities than YETP -- showed overall percentages of 45-30-15 and handicapped percentages of 64-20-16.

Statistics such as these are, of course, open to a variety of interpretations. The regulatory change permitting enrollment of handicapped youth who are <u>not</u> economically disadvantaged may have played a role in the enrollment of predominantly white participants. Parental advocacy for white handicapped youth may also have been more vigorous. But CETA operators who claimed -- as some did -- that they could not find handicapped adults and youth who could meet their economic criteria for disadvantage probably reflected nothing so much as their lack of outreach to and contact with the handicapped population. Most experts in affairs of handicapped individuals in the United States maintain that the incidence of disability is three to four times higher for economically disadvantaged individuals than for any others. "This is the result in many cases of what you would expect -- poor prenatal care, poor nutrition, and poor medical services," observes Paul Hippolitus. In cases of mental retardation, heredity works to perpetuate the problem. Taken together, all of this information -- from enrollment and participant characteristics to job placement -- strongly suggests that CETA programs have dealt with only the least handicapped and most advantaged in the overall handicapped youth population. The suggestion is that lack of outreach to the handicapped community is a major contributing factor.

This lack of outreach to or contact with the handicapped population is the main finding of an MDC survey conducted in the spring and summer of 1981. A total of 45 CETA prime sponsors received a three-page survey form designed to elicit information about the involvement of handicapped youth in CETA programs. A total of 28 replies were received -- including three from balance-of-state programs -- and additional follow-up was done by phone to obtain clarification or elucidation of answers.

While the sample was not scientifically randomized, the author's experience working in depth with a dozen prime sponsors suggests that the respondents were more or less typical. It is not at all surprising, for instance, to note that the highest percentage of handicapped young people in CETA youth programs was in YETP (Youth Employment Training Program), which was the predominantly in-school program; or that most prime sponsors did not identify "handicapped youth" as a significant, separate target group for their Title II-B programs, since youth are not broken out as a group in that program. (A number of the CETA programs did, however, identify the generic "handicapped" as a significant segment for service in Title II-B.)

Statistical results seem particularly untrustworthy in the light of explanatory comments and, indeed, cast doubt on the trustworthiness of national figures obtained through the Department of Labor from the same sources -- the prime sponsors. (While totals may be affected by errors in accounting for handicapped youth, the increase in service reflected by national statistics probably is reliable.) The problem is framed by one respondent's answer to the question: "What are the major problems you've encountered in your efforts to serve this population?"

"Often," the prime sponsor wrote, "the Department of Rehabilitation refers enrollees to CETA whose handicaps are not physically apparent. Many of these enrollees may escape the label 'handicapped' and their problems may not be given adequate consideration." As though to dispell any remaining question of the meaning of this language, the respondent elaborated in a telephone follow-up: "Look, let's face it. We don't have anybody in this office who knows anything about handicaps. We've probably got some clients with handicaps and we don't know it. We've probably counted some as handicapped who aren't."

The candor may have been unusual, but the theme was one that appeared again and again in the responses. Although the specific question was not asked, responses made clear that few (no more than three or four) of the CETA programs being surveyed had on their staffs or at their immediate disposal anyone capable of doing routine assessment of handicapped individuals. Only 12 of the 28 responding prime sponsors listed Vocational Rehabilitation as an agency with which they had linkages. Fully half a dozen programs clearly had no notion of the availability of any agency assistance for the handicapped locally. And that despite the presence of chapters of the National Association for Retarded Citizens, Goodwill, and various kinds of sheltered workshop programs -- not to mention highly developed advocacy networks -- in those very communities.

The same point is made in a different way in a 1980 study of handicapped participation in CETA programs conducted by the North Carolina Association for Handicapped Citizens. In that survey of 120 balance-of-state subcontractors, an effort was made to ascertain what means the subcontractors had used to bring handicapped individuals into CETA programs. The Employment Service ranked highest followed by the category "walk-ins," both of these categories ranking well above Vocational Rehabilitation, for instance. The survey authors commented: "The striking fact is that the passive recruitment of handicapped applicants by CETA contractors, that is, 'walk-ins', outranks all but one other method of solicitation."42/

The North Carolina survey also attempted to measure the accessibility of CETA programs to handicapped, particularly physically handicapped, individuals. One-third of the respondents to the survey indicated that their facilities were not fully accessible. In the MDC survey, 11 of the 28 respondents indicated that lack of accessibility was a problem in their facilities.

The North Carolina survey, a year earlier than MDC's, turned up a 3.76 percent enrollment of handicapped individuals (adults and youth) in CETA programs and noted that the percentage would have been lower except for the presence of a few community-operated sheltered workshop programs run exclusively for handicapped people. (That is true as well of the national figures -- 8.5 percent for all handicapped in 1980.)

For what these statistics are worth, the MDC survey seems to support national figures insofar as increasing enrollments of handicapped youth are concerned. In 17 of the 28 programs responding, the number of handicapped youth in the second quarter of Fiscal 1981 was greater than the number in the second quarter of Fiscal 1980 -- that despite the fact that in a number of cases the prime sponsors reported a decrease in the overall enrollment of youth.

Employer attitude problems seemed more dramatic in the programs surveyed than would have been expected from the national placement rates. Ten of the programs surveyed by MDC (36 percent) indicated that negative employer attitudes toward the handicapped impaired placement. "Employers here have no conception that handicapped youth have a place in industry other than at the lowest skill-levels," one prime sponsor reported.

Three of the primes indicated that they had had "less" trouble getting private sector placement for handicapped youth than for non-handicapped youth, but also considerably less luck with retention. "Placement and completion rates for handicapped enrollees are higher than for non-handicapped enrollees. Why? Not sure, but perhaps it is because the handicapped are more motivated and have fewer problems relative to socialization and basic education," reported one prime. And in the next breath: "Their (handicapped youth's) retention rate is the poorest of all CETA enrollees. Not certain of reasons for this, but the problem probably is low productivity."

Low productivity? Unpreparedness on the part of the employer? A little of both? The theme of poor retention is common, running through many of the results figures on employment of the handicapped; it is one to which this study will return.

But whatever must be done to raise retention rates, the fact remains that, by any reading of the statistics, CETA programs (other than those specifically aimed at the handicapped) have had little contact with the world of the handicapped, and thus have reached few handicapped youth. The idea of mainstreaming the handicapped into regular training programs is one that has been paid little more than lip service. One thing that most of the CETA prime sponsors surveyed by MDC seemed to agree on was that they are unprepared to deal with handicapped youth at present. In most cases, that view was explained in terms of avoiding duplication.

"I do not believe we should have our own system for working with handicapped youth," one prime commented. "Subcontracting to Vocational Rehabilitation or other agencies would be appropriate."

* * * * *

> On the video screen the young woman looks attentively into the eyes of the "employer" with whom she is interviewing. He asks her how she found out about the job she is applying for. She says she heard about it from her counselor. He asks her why she decided to interview for the job. She says that she can do the work. She hesitates a moment, then, but continues to look directly into his eyes, as though expecting a further response or another question from him. When he does not speak, she says that printing was her favorite work in high school. Her words are formed a little slowly; it is as though she were speaking in a kind of dream-state or in slow motion. As the interview progresses, the young woman sitting in the darkened room, observing her image on the video screen, becomes slightly agitated. She stirs in her chair, smiles a little, places her hand against the side of her face. When the image of herself on the screen hesitates before answering a question, the young woman exhales sharply. At one point, clearly dissatisfied with her performance, she places her head in her hands and shakes it from side to side.

The program in which Maria was enrolled in the early months of 1980 was a CETA-funded program run by an agency qualified to work with handicapped youth. The Bexar County Labor Community Agency, formed with the support of the San Antonio AFL-CIO, was established to provide services to youth normally left out of mainstream CETA services. Its tilt toward serving handicapped youth was -- as is so often the case -- the result of having a director whose interest lay in that direction.

Tinker Legg, the director, was herself a former special education teacher with a strong desire to see youth with handicaps served as much as possible alongside those ordinarily described as non-handicapped. "Two labels," Ms. Legg said. "Neither one of them worth much. I never saw a kid who didn't have some handicap or other, and most so-called handicapped kids are more able than disabled. Maybe we need to use these labels to focus attention on what youngsters really need, but we don't have to take them literally."

In December of 1979, Maria enrolled in what the agency called its APL (Adult Performance Level) program, which was designed to teach world-of-work and "survival" skills to 104 disadvantaged youth -- 61 of them Ms. Legg's "so-called non-handicapped" and 43 handicapped (most, like Maria, mentally retarded). The goal of the program was placement in nonsubsidized employment which, for Maria, meant -- she hoped -- a job in the printing industry.

Her counselor, Armando Enderle, described Maria as she entered the program: "She was shy, maybe even frightened. She had been protected and she sensed, maybe, that that was ending. But you couldn't help liking her and she tried hard."

Maria's mother worried about her. "I knew she didn't really know much about the world, what happens out there," she remembers. "But her high school counselor had given her some confidence, I don't know how..."

Rosie Arias, Maria's vocational adjustment coordinator, felt when Maria graduated from high school that it was important that she make a connection ith a good program, something to heighten her sense of self-worth. "I had

had good luck with Tinker Legg's program -- BCLCA. I knew they did a good job." For once, then, the connection so often missed between high school and post-secondary training was made. Maria's chances were automatically improved.

But she had a long way to go. She dreaded going to San Antonio College, where the APL training was given. "I knew it would be big," she remembered months later. "I didn't know what to expect. College." She shook her head.

But she adjusted. Enderle's notebook on her progress yields an account of that process... "She says it is not as bad as she thought it would be," he wrote a month later. "Maria seems to be coming out of her shell a little. She is not as paranoid about 'what other people think of her.' She is doing well at school..."

She continued to do well at school, and her mother noted distinct improvements at home. "She started going out a little, to a movie, with some girls and some boys." Maria finished APL in February 1980 and got certificates in Community Resources and Mathematics for Business. In March, she began work experience at Brooks Army Hospital as a clinic assistant and female chaperone, her duties including general office work and meeting the public: four hours, five days a week.

It was not printshop work, but it was something. In April, Maria started a new job search. Enderle's notebook picks up the threads of her progress. "Maria is doing very well. She is a hard tryer. She does not do well at job interviews -- only because she lacks self-confidence. She has good job skills and does well once she is working... She does well on the telephone. She's a rather plain girl and this does not help in an interview. She has a speech impediment and this does not help her because she is aware of it and it causes her to become more shy."

Again and again, Enderle coached Maria in job interviewing. They would videotape the interview and Maria would then look at it and critique it herself. She was never satisfied, but she did improve, however slowly. And she continued to broaden her area of skills. She did file clerk work successfully for a while at Fort Sam Houston and was a teacher's aide at a day-care center, responsible for seven children. She was described by a supervisor in that job as a "quick learner."

But Maria was having no luck finding that unsubsidized job. Printshop after printshop turned her down. The bigger shops did not even offer hope of employment beyond the routine of filling out an application. The smaller shops, where there was more turnover, generally told her that they would get back in touch with her. None did.

Maria was asked about that. Did she believe them when they said that they would get back to her? Yes, she said, she did. Ms. Legg offered an opinion. "She really does believe it. She has been protected, kept away from bad experiences and she is trusting. She is trusting with everyone."

One potential employer who had interviewed Maria responded to an inquiry about why he had not hired her. "I won't say that no jobs have come open since she was here," he said. "But I run a small shop and I need someone who can meet the public as well as run the press. You can see for yourself. You've seen her. How can I expect someone like that to make a good impression on a new customer?"

Ms. Legg and Enderle could only shake their heads. "The sad thing is that the employer is losing too," another counselor observed. "Maria is just the sort who would stick with a job like that; she'd be satisfied and she'd be there every day, on time."

Maria's real handicap is that she is limited in what she can achieve through intellectual processes, a statement that is more or less true of most people. Her "perceived" handicaps, however, are actually in the employer's eye, and get in his way. She is female, she is Mexican-American, and she "looks" handicapped. Gliedman and Roth comment on that kind of case. "Some major disabilities are perfectly irrelevant to an individual's job ability; other disabilities cruelly reduce it; and often it is hard to tell which is which... However, discrimination takes many forms and some of these forms hurt the employer almost as much as the employee. When a firm turns away an especially well qualified worker because of race, sex, or disability... both the worker and the firm suffer.[43]

Race, sex, and disability all worked against Maria, but the BCLCA was not about to give up. The agency had reason to believe that its APL training was something special. The previous year, in a mixed handicapped and non-handicapped group, they had given the APL component to two-thirds of the group, holding out one-third for purposes of comparison. The overall placement rate for the APL youth was 95 percent, compared to 52 percent for the non-APL group. In Maria's group of handicapped and non-handicapped youth, all had subsequently been given the APL component. A year later, telephone follow-up was conducted to determine how the handicapped group of 43 young people had fared compared with the non-handicapped group (61). Donn Lorbieski of Ms. Legg's staff supervised the work and shared some interesting results:

- Initial positive placement rates (counting military service and subsidized placements as positive) were 81 percent. The non-handicapped group had a placement rate of 90 percent, while the handicapped group had a placement rate of 67 percent.

The follow-up team calculated earnings for each member of the APL group, handicapped and non-handicapped, for the year following termination. Those in the military service, in college, and the very few who were in subsidized employment were eliminated from those calculations. The remaining group of 50 who had been substantially in unsubsidized employment broke out evenly -- 25 handicapped and 25 non-handicapped.

- As a group, those 50 youth experienced earnings totaling $170,876 in that year. Costs of training them (calculated on a basis of $2,158 per participant) were $107,900.

- Total earnings of the non-handicapped group were $89,909. Total earnings of the handicapped group were $80,967.

- Thus, the group of handicapped youth who had found employment had earnings not substantially below those of their non-handicapped brothers and sisters in the first year after training.

"It was encouraging," noted Ms. Legg. But it didn't help Maria. One year after finishing her training, she was still looking for work and her sights had been lowered. She was no longer concentrating on printshop work exclusively; she was interviewing for clerical jobs and other kinds of jobs as well. And she was continuing to meet obstacles in the form of negative employer attitudes.

* * * * *

> "You have a hell of a time getting a handicapped kid a job. People are afraid of handicaps. They look at a kid and make a judgment that he's too handicapped to do the job. Maybe they do a test that tends to show he might have trouble doing this or that. But they don't have tests that show what a kid can do. And the hard part is just getting him a chance, just a chance to show that..."
>
> Mickey's father

Mickey had his high school diploma and he was ready to go to work, but it seemed that even in the relatively prosperous year of 1979, there were no jobs for him in Flint, Michigan. Mickey's father refused to accept that his son couldn't do honest work for an honest wage and he arranged an appointment for Mickey with Vocational Rehabilitation.

Gerald L. Grantner, district office supervisor for VR, remembers when Mickey walked in the door. "The way he walked, you could see how handicapped he was. I said, 'Oh, Lord, we'll never place him.'" But Grantner, who himself has only one arm, was impressed with Mickey's determination. He referred the boy to Goodwill and that service found him a part-time job as a janitor.

Mickey did the job to the best of his ability but he wasn't satisfied. His father wasn't satisfied either. "Mickey wanted full-time work and was capable of doing it," he said. "We set about to try to find him a real, full-time job."

It was a frustrating business. Mickey later told a Flint newspaper that it was more difficult than when he broke his leg and had to learn to walk all over again. "Nobody would hire me for a job," he said. "I told them to give me a chance."[44/] With his parents' support, Mickey kept at it. He got as far as the physical examination with a big manufacturing firm in Flint and then was rejected for having poor coordination. "That was sad," his father said. "I saw the job and I knew Mickey could do it. I knew it."

Both of Mickey's parents had worked at General Motors and they set about trying to get him a job there. Mickey's father wrote a letter to the chairman of the board and Mickey ended up in a hiring center. He got through the medical orientation successfully and then nothing happened.

By this time, Mickey had applied personally at approximately 25 businesses in Flint and environs -- schools, hospitals, and businesses -- without success. During this time Mickey's father continued to keep his son in touch with Vocational Rehabilitation. He also wrote a letter to Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano about his son. Grantner picks up the story:

"To my mind, it is a classic case of how the system can work. We had had the referral and we had helped him get a job. He wanted a full-time job, however, and came back. I guess it's true that we weren't getting anywhere. I do remember that we decided to review a batch of cases and his was one of them. We pulled him as someone we ought to be able to help. There was talk of his going to GM and I didn't know whether he would make it there. I've seen guys out at GM take a handicapped worker under their wing and I've seen them make kids miserable."

At any rate, Mickey's father's letter to Califano landed on Grantner's desk sometime during the re-evaluation process. "We had a good relationship with St. Joseph's hospital and I thought maybe that's the place for Mickey." As it turned out, it was. Mickey was hired as a full-time janitor. He was also honored by being named Goodwill's Graduate of the Year for 1979.

"If you ask me," says Grantner, "I would give the parents the credit. They did all the right things. The kid shows up on time, looks neat, has a plus attitude... The parents gave him that." Was it, perhaps, also because the parents were vocal in their support and willing to shake some trees, he was asked? "They were vocal, yes, but they had something to be vocal about... They could deliver a kid who was ready and able to learn."

A personnel manager in one of the companies that had turned Mickey down for employment a few months before he got his job remembered the boy. "You don't forget CP kids. This one was really handicapped but, yeah, he presented himself well. I won't cop out completely on why we didn't hire him but in the end this wasn't my decision... To be truthful, most of us have a long ways to go before we're ready to hire strictly on the basis of potential and not on appearance..."

* * * * *

> The man who is "blind" later takes off the dark goggles and talks about the fear that he has felt, and about his sense of insecurity. The "deaf" man, earplugs discarded, describes the eerie sensation of being at a table, eating lunch, with people whose words he could not hear, whose laughter baffled him. "I felt isolated and people were looking at me," he says in an unconscious reflection of the mild paranoia many handicapped individuals have to overcome at some early point in their progress. The most articulate is the community college president, who talked about his participation in a meeting some weeks later... "It was an unforgettable experience," he says. "I was in a wheelchair and I had to get from where the workshop was conducted across town to where we were to have lunch. I could have help -- I guess I could have it -- but anyway if I had it I had to ask for it and I didn't do that. I didn't really have much trouble operating the wheelchair but I learned a lot about what you can and can't do in one. I learned that you can't get in the restaurant where we were supposed to eat in one -- not without some help. That made me think: Suppose I worked here and I was hurrying not to be late and I couldn't raise anyone by pounding on the door. I could never get up the steps and in that door by myself. I'd be out there, I guess, until they came to get me. And if they didn't I guess I could just wheel myself home and forget that job..."

It was called Project GAP (Governor's Awareness Program), and it was begun in 1979 with a push from Governor Jim Hunt of North Carolina. The idea was to take workshops around to private and public employers in an effort to overcome resistance to hiring the handicapped. One part of the workshop was called "simulation" and was intended to give the potential employer a sense of what it felt like to be handicapped.

Peyton Maynard, who ran the program for a considerable period of time, did not always use the simulation piece of the workshop. "I guess I have a plus and minus feeling about it," he said. "The participants in simulation can get overly sympathetic. They can say you ought to hire these poor folks... At the same time, if they've had a hard time getting around in a wheelchair, which isn't unlikely since it's their first time, it reinforces their conviction that it is going to be hard for a disabled person to get around in their plant."

The workshops were run by two individuals, one of them handicapped and one not. Jim Wilson, who is deaf, speaks in the faintly mechanical voice of one who has learned to speak without having heard words. He is witty and skilled at putting his audience at ease. It is all right, he told participants at one workshop, to use words like "look" and "see" to a blind person. "Disabled people do not have their own language," he said.45/

For seven-and-one-half hours, the participants were put through a series of exercises and demonstrations in the standard GAP workshop. Between 10 and 20 individuals participated. They were encouraged to look at the reasons most employers give for not hiring handicapped workers. "It gives them a chance to look at all the reasons others (for which they can read 'themselves') give for why not to hire the handicapped," Maynard said... "It's too expensive," federal regulations are too burdensome, they can't sell it to their staff... Whereas what they really think is that disabled people don't make good workers."

Attitudes toward the handicapped may be improving, but various studies indicate that they had plenty of room for improvement. A study in Los Angeles in 1973 revealed that employer attitudes toward disabled persons were less favorable than those toward any other prospective groups of applicants surveyed, including elderly individuals, minority group members, ex-convicts, and student radicals. A 1972 study in Minnesota found that 50 percent of the employers surveyed would not consider a blind or mentally retarded person for any job.46/

The psychology here is worth a careful look. Asked to compare groups in so generalized a way, the employers reacted, naturally enough, with a generalized answer. A disabled person, so described, simply could not be as good a worker (as though by definition) as one who was not disabled -- even when the non-disabled worker was described in terms calculated to give the average employer pause, as for instance "student radical." It is as though all non-disabled individuals in the country were on a good-to-poor rating list, at the very bottom of which appeared the name of the best-qualified disabled person, followed, in descending order of competency, by all other disabled persons.

"The prejudice against handicapped workers is just like the prejudice against any other minority group," Maynard said. "It's not rational. If you asked an employer if he believed that the best 'handicapped' worker wasn't better than the poorest 'non-handicapped' worker, he'd say 'sure.' But his hiring practices may not reflect that. If he does hire a handicapped worker, he may apply what I call the 'first screw-up principle,' which means that the first mistake the handicapped worker made would be his last."

Despite the settled nature of the prejudice involved, the North Carolina GAP program did show evidence of results. An evaluation undertaken in 1980, involving pre- and post-testing of participants on their attitudes, noted gains. An evaluator wrote: "Comparison of the pre- and post-percentages shows the large knowledge gains which participants feel they have achieved by attending the workshop... the highest post-test selfratings are found for awareness of attitudinal misconceptions, comfort in interactions, and knowledge about resource agencies and architectural barriers... The improvement... suggests that the attending employers gained new knowledge which could affect their hiring practices."47/

There is evidence that these results translated into changes in hiring practices. A number of the participating firms -- among them Duke Power, General Electric, and Westinghouse -- set up their own workshops as a result of participation in the program. By mid-1981, Maynard and others concluded that the market for the GAP workshops had been saturated, and that it was time for the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities, which had the program under its wing, to look to other directions, such as assisting CETA contractors in strengthening their affirmative action programs.

In the end, the question for employers has to be: Is it worth it? Is it worth it to an employer in terms of profit realization to hire disabled workers? "We like to get the question asked in those terms," Maynard noted. "Because any hiring of the handicapped out of sympathy will be counterproductive in the long run. The only real reason to hire a handicapped worker is that you can get one as good as or better than your average so-called non-handicapped worker."

The record of studies of handicapped individuals at work is far from complete, but any number of studies done academically or in the workplace by employers themselves suggest that handicapped individuals make average and often better than average employees. One of the most frequently quoted studies was done by du Pont in 1973. In that study, records of 1,452 handicapped individuals were examined and interviews were conducted with their supervisors. The supervisors rated 96 percent of those workers average or above average on safety performance, 91 percent average or higher on job performance, and 79 percent average or better in attendance.[48]

In a later survey, International Telephone and Telegraph reported an extremely positive experience in its Corinth, Mississippi, plant, where 125 disabled individuals had been assimilated into the 2,000-member work force. That 1978 survey showed that the plant had achieved an all-time safety record of 3.7 million man-hours worked without injury; that no disabled worker had suffered more than a minor on-the-job injury since starting with the company; and that disabled workers had proved more productive and had fewer absences than their coworkers.

Nor did IT&T have to spend lavishly to prepare its plant for the disabled workers. The total bill was $400 for ramps and handrails, $100 for restroom bars, $250 for a drinking fountain, and $22,000 for an elevator to the second-floor cafeteria -- an elevator that, of course, benefited all employees.[49]

But if employment of disabled individuals may be a good investment for the employer, it is certainly a good investment for society. And the beneficiaries are not only the handicapped, who are given the opportunity to work productively and take their place alongside their more fortunate coworkers, but the average taxpayer himself.

Set aside for a moment the gains in productivity, which tend to have an exponential effect as they spread through the work force, and concentrate only on the cost of maintaining a handicapped individual who is not working. The Rehabiliitation Institute of Chicago, working with the Chicago Rotary Club, recently placed 176 individuals with handicaps in competitive jobs in fields as diverse as accounting, field engineering, spot welding, sales, psychiatric nursing, computer programming, and design engineering. The Institute computed the savings to society in transfer payments alone -- health insurance payments, workmen's compensation, public aid, and social security -- as $1,056,000 in a single year.50/

Tinker Legg of the Bexar County Labor Community Agency (San Antonio) and Robert Mazer of United Cerebral Palsy Association came up with some cost-benefit figures that entirely ignore the benefit to the handicapped individual and focus wholly on the return of taxpayers' investment in training for employment. The average cost of state institutionalization for a disabled individual in Texas was computed at $1,800 a month, or $21,600 a year. The training and job placement of an institutionalized individual -- not unheard of in Ms. Legg's own program -- would result in a savings of $21,600 to the taxpayer in the first year, plus an additional $1,598 in a new federal taxes (income and social security -- based on average wages paid the year afterwards) paid as a result of employment -- a total of $22,198.

The per-trainee cost of Ms. Legg's program at that time (1981) was approximately $4,400. It is clear that the placement in work at a minimum wage of an institutionalized handicapped individual would pay for the cost of training four others in the first year afterwards alone.

Semi-independent handicapped individuals (living alone) would draw as much as $528.50 a month in the HUD supplement, SSI, and housekeeper service -- they calculated -- for a total annual cost of $6,342. Federal taxes paid in the first year of their employment totaling around $1,598 would bring the "cost saved" in the first year to $7,940, a sum that would pay for the training of one and one-half other handicapped individuals in Ms. Legg's program in that first year alone.

Even a dependent handicapped individual living with a guardian or parent would draw $238.50 a month in SSI. That's $2,862 a year. Plus the $1,598 in new federal taxes would make a savings of $4,460, which would come to approximately the cost of that individual's training. In other words, that individual would return the cost of his or her training in one year in reduced public welfare costs and increased earnings alone. Even if some continued subsidization of handicapped individuals following job placement were desirable, such programs clearly are advantageous to the taxpayer.

It is important to understand that these figures are conservative. State taxes, sales taxes, and other taxes that could be counted as repayment of transfers are not figured in here, nor are the Medicare/Medicaid costs, which are often considerable.

Good training programs have a considerable payoff to the taxpayer, then, but what do they achieve for the participant in terms of increased earnings? One of the best studies of that question is an examination of the costs versus the benefits in earnings increases of 22 retarded adults involved in a model vocational training and placement follow-up program -- the Employment and Training Project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.[51]

The study participants were followed over a two-year period and projections of costs and benefit were extended to a 20-year period, using an attrition rate table to help calculate costs and earnings of successive groups going through the program. It was discovered that the benefits would begin to exceed yearly costs in the fifth year, and that during the eighth year, the cumulative benefits would exceed the cumulative costs. "After ten years of the program, 49 competitively employed and 29 terminated adults would have earned $1,626,724. The cost to operate the vocational training project would approach $1,414,304. Therefore the net cumulative cost-benefit would result in a benefit of $212,420." At the end of 20 years that net cumulative benefit would be $2,117,930.

The study's authors noted that over the two years in which the 22 adults in the study were followed, changes in their life-styles were noted. "For those individuals living at home with their family or independently in an apartment, enough money was earned to enjoy many of society's common pleasures such as going out to dinner or going to a show with friends or coworkers. In fact, as a result of employment, six persons associated with this project moved into apartment settings."

The authors noted as well the obvious savings to society involved in getting those individuals off support payments and into independent, and competitive, situations. "It would appear that a sizable amount of federal and state money would be saved if these individuals could become contributors to society instead of users of society's money," the authors note.

Those 22 mentally retarded adults and others who move through the Employment and Training Project would probably have been considered unemployable not too many years ago. They were moderately to severely retarded. All had been in a sheltered workshop, and 14 of them resided, before the training, in a facility for the developmentally disabled.

Indeed, a major purpose of the study was to compare the costs and benefits of training for competitive employment with the costs and benefits of the sheltered workshop. The authors of the study calculated the cost of placement of one mentally retarded individual in a sheltered workshop at $5,028 a year. That cost was never repaid. The authors put the matter bluntly: "The results suggested that sheltered workshops always operate at a cost, whereas programs that seek to employ individuals competitively operate at a benefit."

* * * * *

In March, 1981, a sheltered workshop was the last thing on Dave McNelly's mind for Harold. The boy had been a VOTIS-CETA participant for 18 months -- twice the recommended time -- and McNelly was concerned that continued employment in the athletic supply company at a minimum wage might tend to foster dependency and encourage unrealistic expectations. The time had come for Harold to find an unsubsidized job in the competitive market.

McNelly could not be sure Harold would make it. He had watched the youth develop during the past five years, and while he saw signs of growth, he also knew something of Harold's continuing problems and limitations. The effects of his medication -- slurred speech, a fixed stare, and a slight, habitual nodding of the head -- could be alarming if you were not used to them. And Harold still had periods of depression and withdrawal that affected his performance, though he was more willing to talk about it these days.

Still, Harold was smart. He had developed a number of useful skills, and, most of the time, he was dependable and hard-working. There had been signals that he might be ready for a more independent life -- filing an application for the Merchant Marine, fixing up his own apartment in the shed -- and he was even willing to ride the bus to work occasionally when his mother was not able to drive him.

McNelly thought that Harold could handle a full-time unsubsidized job, but that the situation would have to be tailored to his needs and capabilities. McNelly found two job openings, one with a paint company located near his subsidized job, and involving similar work; the other was a job with a landscaping business whose owner was a friend of McNelly's interested enough in the situation to promise to work with the youth personally and even to pick him up each morning.

McNelly discussed both job possibilities with Harold. The more they talked, the more nervous Harold seemed to get about the prospect of leaving his present job. McNelly pointed out that he would be earning more than the minimum wage and working a full eight-hour day, but money did not mean much to Harold -- he was still turning over his earnings to his mother and drawing an allowance. McNelly gave Harold two months to decide which job he wanted and then watched in alarm as the youth grew increasingly withdrawn. When McNelly called Harold's mother, she reported that her son was having problems at home and complaining about hearing voices again. The family physician had substantially increased his medication. Harold was like a zombie at work -- McNelly could not get through to him. Then he stopped coming to work at all. McNelly learned that Harold's mother was ill and that Harold refused to ride the bus. So McNelly drove Harold to and from work for several days. Finally, he told Harold that he would have to take some initiative or he would lose his subsidized job and his chances for future employment.

A week went by and Harold did not show up. When McNelly called, Harold's mother told him that her son was "having another nervous breakdown." He was not able to speak coherently and was acting "wild and crazy." The doctor had put him under heavy sedation. Harold was unable to leave the house and was not to be disturbed, she said. His mother was considering committing him to a Seattle medical center for a 30-day examination period.

Harold was terminated from the VOTIS and CETA programs in May of 1981. McNelly did not see or hear from the youth for several months. In July, he called Harold's parents and learned that, after refusing to go into the hospital, Harold had improved gradually on his own, had become a Vocational Rehabilitation client, and was currently working in a state-subsidized sheltered workshop.

While Harold did not stay in that sheltered workshop long, it is not surprising that he was referred there. Over the past 15 years, the worker population of sheltered workshops has increased five-fold to a total estimated recently at approximately 200,000.52/ More significantly, the bulk of that increase has been among the more severely handicapped workers, many of whom have been returned to their communities as part of the de-institutionalization movement nationally.

This major increase in the number of sheltered workshop employees who are at the less productive level has had a negative effect on wages paid by even those workshops that abide strictly by the rules. A major study by the United States Department of Labor in 1977 found that the average hourly wages paid to all sheltered workshop employees had actually decreased by four percent over the 1968-73 period, while average hourly wages of privately employed nonsupervisory workers were increasing by 38 percent.53/

Federal law establishing the workshops allows them to pay a worker below the minimum wage for commensurately less work than the average non-handicapped worker would do. Thus, if a sheltered workshop worker produces only 50 widgets an hour while the established industrial production rate is 100, he can legally be paid half the going wage in the area for that sort of work. A pay rate equal to half of the minimum wage serves as a floor for most sheltered workshop employees, but not for the increasing number of severely handicapped clients. Those clients are placed in a "work activity" category because their production is considered inconsequential; they are, as a result, covered by no minimum pay provisions.

Thus, 10 cents an hour is a wage that can be and is paid to some sheltered workshop clients. The work activity clients -- as they are often referred to -- are no small group, either; they constituted 49 percent of the sheltered workshop population in 1973.[54]

It is true, as we shall see, that many of those severely handicapped workers have other subsidized means of support, and it is arguable that keeping them occupied even at extremely low wages is a reasonable alternative to idleness. At the same time, sheltered workshops have been scrutinized closely in recent years as a result of newspaper and television coverage concerning cheating.

One of the more widely publicized series of such stories appeared in the Wall Street Journal on several days in January and October of 1979. The first two articles dealt with treatment of blind workers in some workshops. The second focused on ways in which some workshop managements cheated workers of fair pay either by setting "normal" productivity unrealistically high or by estimating the commensurate wage in private industry unrealistically low. "This is not actually a sheltered workshop," a compliance inspector said of one institution inspected. "This is simply a pallet manufacturing plant with a built-in source of cheap labor."[55]

Perhaps even more disturbing were findings in one of the Department of Labor studies that, while 12 percent of the sheltered workshop workers had disabilities that did not interfere at all with their work performance, they were still averaging only $1.37 an hour -- 40 percent less than the minimum wage. Another 21 percent were hampered only "slightly," and yet they averaged only 96 cents an hour.

What makes these figures disturbing is the evidence that in many cases mentally retarded workers, who make up the bulk of the low-paid employees of workshops, can do as well as or better than the average non-handicapped worker. For their part, blind workers often have a special aptitude born of experience for certain kinds of manual work -- which is definitely not to say that any given blind person may not also have an aptitude for nuclear physics.

The fact that some severely handicapped persons do require special working conditions accounts for the need for sheltered workshops. Even if it is conceded that most sheltered workshops do as well as possible and that there are living models of superior performance, a major question would remain. Does the system too often work to keep as many workers in shelter (however fairly they may be paid) as is needed to justify its continuance? A second question relates to the first: Does the system encourage sheltered workshop employees to stay out of the market for competitive employment?

The Department of Labor study cast some light on the first question. It indicated that clients were moved from sheltered workshops into competitive employment in community jobs at a rate of 12 percent of the total served annually. Since less than 15 percent (around one in seven) of that group had to be returned to the workshop for further training or services, it can be assumed that fairly good choices were made either by workshop management or by the workers themselves. The question of how many more handicapped workers in sheltered workshops could succeed outside that environment is one that is difficult to answer -- and one for which the answer would necessarily be tied to the health of the economy at the time -- but the DOL study noted that, far from being crowded, sheltered workshops are "substantially" underutilized, with half of them reporting unused capacity sufficient to have employed nearly one-third more clients than the 267,920 served in that reporting year. It seems hardly likely that those workshops using handicapped workers as a "source of cheap labor" would be interested in moving them out into competitive employment under those circumstances.

The handicapped workers themselves may look forward as much with apprehension as with eagerness to a future outside a supported work environment. The system of financial support discussed earlier in this chapter in terms of its cost to the taxpayer is based on the demonstrable inability of the recipient to earn above a minimal level. The Wall Street Journal story noted that the sheltered workshop employees stood to lose important benefits (including Medicaid) should their earnings exceed $189.40 a month (1.09 an hour) at that time (1979). Now Medicaid can appear to be essential to individuals with handicaps that may require substantial medical attention. Only a very secure handicapped worker would be willing to risk losing benefits in order to go into competitive employment for wages only slightly higher than those paid in the sheltered workshop. The Journal even found workshop administrators who argued that they were doing workers a favor, in effect, by refusing them wage increases.

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> The high school corridor is crowded with pushing, shouting, laughing students making their way from classrooms to the cafeteria. In the midst of this high-spirited melee, a solitary figure moves heavily and slowly, one step behind a large German shepherd guide dog. Several kids cower, giggling against one wall, pretending to be afraid. Others call out -- "Here pup, over here..." Still others simply try to give the young woman and her dog a wide berth, but it is difficult owing to the rapid movement and the narrowness of the corridor. The dog, itself, seems confused by the tumult and the young woman has her hand extended in front of her as though to ward off a collision with someone who might run into her accidentally. One student detaches herself from the others and comes over to her to help her walk. The dog suffers this invasion of its responsibility tolerantly, and the three make their way down the corridor toward the cafeteria. Steps to be negotiated there and the dog dutifully nudges the young woman back and indicates the stairway by placing its front paws on the first step down. The students back out of the way to watch, several of them expressing their amazement with self-conscious gasps...

Polly grew up on a farm in Belleville, Michigan, one of nine children in a family that proceeded to adopt four more, as though willing to settle for nothing less than a baker's dozen. She was a normal, healthy child in a crowded house. "It wasn't as bad as it sounds though," she recalls. "Some of my brothers and sisters were older and we weren't all there at the same time. Anyway, I like having lots of people around and I liked living in the country. I prefer it over city life."

Two of the adopted children were the same age as Polly, and all three went off daily to school and returned to the cows and chickens and hogs and life on the farm. Polly got passing grades, although sometimes not without a struggle. But in 1977, in the ninth grade, she flunked her eye test. That meant a thorough examination. The doctor saw something he was not sure about and sent her to a specialist.

Polly had been having headaches. Glaucoma ran in the family. Eyeglasses were prescribed. Polly's vision improved, but the headaches continued and even seemed to get worse. More tests. "It turned out to be a malignant tumor about the size of a small tangerine," Polly remembered. "It was a question of maybe I'd die and maybe I'd be blind, and maybe I'd come out all right. Ten-and-one-half hours of surgery."

Polly did not die, but she did not come out all right either. When the bandages came off, she asked about Braille lessons. She began in June, and by September had learned enough to cope. She struggled through the 10th grade, managing with her studies but finding the simple process of getting around even more difficult than she had imagined. By the 11th grade, she had Mandy, courtesy of the Commission for the Blind.

"It did take a while for the students to get used to me and my dog," she remembered. "It was a real adjustment in a crowded school, but it made all the difference in the world to me just in being able to get around." Polly did well enough in her college prep examinations to be offered a scholarship, but the school did not have a good program for the visually impaired. She had heard about a place in Flint, Michigan, with a reputation for training the blind for competitive employment. She and her parents made a visit and were impressed.

Robert J. Esposito, executive director of the Service Center for Visually Impaired, Inc., of Flint remembers Polly and her family showing up that first day. "They seemed good, supportive folks. I do remember that I wasn't sure whether Polly would be very communicative, but she turned out to be." Esposito's center provides a variety of clerical training ranging from simple typing to medical transcription. Students come from all over the state, are boarded often in a nearby facility, and are placed in jobs by a specialist for the Commission for the Blind, usually in their home areas.

Esposito's center has the reputation for training visually impaired students so that they can be employed, and the record of employment out of the center bears out that reputation. Still, Esposito can provide item, number, and case on the matter of disincentives which affect employment of individuals with handicaps. One young woman who had finished medical transcription training (although not earning a certificate) in August 1979 had held no employment by the time of an interview with Esposito in March 1981. Her case is worth examining, because she was not only unemployed, but not looking for employment.

She came to the program in Flint at a time when the State of Michigan was paying an allocation for furniture, so she got $200 for that purpose plus a security bond. She was drawing $265 a month in Social Security Insurance (SSI) plus $36 a month in food stamps. She paid $160 a month for a studio apartment, which left a total of $141 a month for utilities, food, and telephone -- a fairly tight fit which she solved by getting into a subsidized housing situation in an apartment house for the elderly and handicapped. That cut her rent to one-fourth of her income -- $85 a month -- and left her with $216 to manage on each month. She rode buses free and told workers at the center that her biggest problem was that she had to pay cabfare to take her dog to the vet, as the buses did not permit animals aboard.

"The sad thing is that in the years since she left here, she's lost her skills," Esposito said. "She hasn't used what we gave her, and now she probably couldn't even if she wanted to." He pulled the file on this young woman and read from a report turned in by her supervisor at the time: "Miss S... is an excellent typist with a good grasp of the language... good adjustment... errors generally due to lack of experience. She needs to develop patience and not be frustrated at the need to repeat exercises... She should work in a controlled situation for at least six weeks."

Not everyone has Polly's motivation to work. And when the results of finding a real job are such that the job-holder can lose an extensive support system which is adequate if not exactly lavish -- and lose Medicaid insurance as well -- it is not surprising that some individuals with handicaps prefer not to work.

Polly finished her standard typing course on time and enrolled in the medical transcription program in July of 1981. She did not finish the medical transcription program, which she found difficult, and instead offered herself for job placement. In December 1981, she was offered a CETA-funded job in Detroit, 35 miles from her parents' home in Belleville. She would be working in a senior citizens' home, doing typing, filing, and answering the phone. She handled the work well but, of course, the job was temporary.

V. Toward Models for the Future

> "The school has been able to integrate a great many activities. The 'normal' child has constant exposure to children in wheelchairs, children with physical deformities, and children with learning and behavioral problems. The staff of the school, from principal to custodian, are willing to accept differences in the children, yet are united in the attitude that each child must share in as many activities as are possible. Assemblies and special institutes on such topics as writing, science, and arts and crafts are always mainstreamed. There are music, science, and French classes which are attended by mixed groups on a regular basis. Provisions have been made for a few physically handicapped youngsters to attend regular classes for 100 percent of the day...56/

At Public Sch~~ool 213~~ in Bayside, New York, the word "mainstreamed" has to be understood in a more encompassing context. In a sense, the school itself is an example of mainstreaming, with up to one handicapped child for every three non-handicapped. In another sense the school is "special" because -- within that context -- the effort is to find the right learning environment for each individual child, whatever his or her abilities.

Even a phrase like "learning environment" needs clarification in the P.S. 213 model. Children learn more than what is in the books and on their teachers' minds. "They see it all," says Dr. Odey Raviv, coordinator of the resource program at the Long Island school and author of the article excerpted above... "Dwarfs, kids with speech problems, kids in wheelchairs, everything... There's very little name-calling or laughing at what handicapped kids look like or sound like or what they can't do. Take some of these kids and put them in the usual school and they would go along with the normal thing of laughing at handicapped kids. But if these kids went into a store they wouldn't have any trouble dealing with a handicapped salesperson."

P.S. 213 was not built specifically to deal with a high proportion of handicapped students. It was built in 1956 in a solidly middle-class Jewish, Irish, and Italian neighborhood, but young people did not stay in that part of Bayside. Gradually, as the neighborhood aged, it became one of adults in their 50's and one of fewer young children. In 1964, in part because of its location and in part because of its architectural adaptability to wheelchairs, the school became the site of a unit serving physically handicapped students from a much broader geographical area.

A walk through such a school is instructive. The overall impression is one of extraordinary unity, as though the school had solved some problems by using the skills of its students, handicapped and non-handicapped, as well as those of its staff. Principal Malcolm Cooper talks about the tutoring system, which uses some of the brighter students (again handicapped as well as non-handicapped) to help younger students with reading problems. The cerebral palsied student pushing the physically handicapped student's wheelchair down the corridor is in the tutoring group that the student in the wheelchair presides over -- a group that includes two non-handicapped slow readers.

P.S. 213 is not an "open" school, however. "We're just a classroom school with the same problems other classroom schools have," says Cooper. "Whatever success we've had stems from trying to utilize the resources of a school to the fullest... Take the parents for instance. I think that the parents of the students here are our greatest asset."

It is fair to say that not all principals of elementary schools consider parents as major school assets, PTAs notwithstanding. The parents who involve themselves in the affairs of P.S. 213 are more often parents of the non-handicapped students, as the handicapped students tend to be from more remote neighborhoods. Benefits work two ways here. An active PTA involves itself in the problems of both the handicapped youth and the other students in the school population of approximately 360. At the same time, Cooper feels, parents themselves are "sensitized," not just to the problems of handicapped youth but to their various levels -- often high levels -- of ability.

Recently, the alliance with parents paid off in concrete terms. Efforts were being made to move the physically handicapped students out of the school in order to utilize an open building, an action which would have segregated those students and cut into the heart of the P.S. 213 experience. The move was opposed by students and faculty, but the successful fight against it was waged by the parents with the assistance of a local politician who had been brought, by frequent visits, into a position of active support for the P.S. 213 program.

Parents and staff at P.S. 213 work hard to help handicapped students without overprotecting them. Basketball at the school is a game played for everyone, with students in wheelchairs participating along with everyone else. At the same time, the PTA recently decided against a roller rink outing as an official school celebration on the ground that the students with handicaps could not fully participate.

Students with handicaps and students without can and do participate in most school activities and in the tutoring program. An additional level of enrichment is added to the tutoring by the presence in the school two days a week of a group of older persons who are stroke victims undergoing physical rehabilitation. That group serves all students in the school on a one-on-one basis as "nurturing grandparents." They provide -- in Dr. Raviv's words -- "another relationship, in many cases a very important one for these children, some of whom are needy in that regard."

By far the most remarkable thing about this school, though, is the atmosphere of problem-solving that prevails. Dr. Raviv tells about a girl with severe learning disability and emotional problems, depressed and suicidal and for a time in psychiatric care. When she came back to the school from institutionalization, she was placed in a class with several brain-injured students and began acting out, exhibiting inappropriate behavior. The coordinator for special education classes observed that she liked the girls in the physically handicapped class and tried her there. The behavior in that class was comforting to her, and her own behavior improved markedly.

It is the willingness to try something else that distinguishes P.S. 213, not any expensive "extras" in physical plant, curricula, or staff. "We're set up financially the same as any other school," says Dr. Raviv. "We have the same teacher-pupil ratio and the same number of special education teachers and I'm sure many of the same problems."

* * * * *

Model-identifying is a precarious business. P.S. 213 in Bayside indeed is a real school with real problems, including its situation in an area where the student population is declining and schools are closing. It is also a relatively small school and, as such, may seem a poor model for a larger school with problems of overcrowding, grossly inadequate staffing, etc. Yet what is done routinely at P.S. 213 is possible to do -- indeed is being done -- in other schools around the country. The effort here and in the remainder of this chapter is not to offer a specific school, agency, training program, or job placement service as a model for all others, but to isolate a few exemplary elements of education, training, and placement of handicapped youth that have a degree of universal application.

The first important function necessary to bring a child with handicaps into the system, is, of course, early identification of the problem or problems. In Chapter I, Child Find was described. Where that service is applied energetically -- in Charlotte, North Carolina, or Escanaba, Michigan -- it contains the significant elements for successful identification of handicaps at preschool or early school age.

Those elements include, first, broad publicizing of the service to the parents of children who may have handicaps. Skillful use of the media in Charlotte acquainted Brent's mother with the service and, although help came along late for him, his learning disability was diagnosed in part through Child Find's efforts. As Child Find has become better known throughout the country, early identification has become more the rule than the exception.

After identification comes good screening to separate the mild and more severe problems; professional assessment of children with the more severe problems; and follow-up with the school or other agency of referral to make possible the most beneficial placement of the child in a learning environment.

A school like P.S. 213 suggests how the public educational system can pick up where that identification process leaves off. The question of whether a child should be taught in a special institution designed for children with similar handicaps is always a difficult one. Many of those institutions do excellent work. But unless the handicap is grievous, the concern that troubled Billy's parents is a legitimate one -- that the child may grow up able to function only in a special situation. If the decision is schooling in the public system, then the lessons of P.S. 213 are applicable.

Ideally, all schools should be vessels of rather than merely instruments of mainstreaming -- they should have a significant number of children with handicaps in their school population. In making out Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), consideration should be given to a handicapped youth's need for socialization with children who are not considered handicapped, and vice versa. Flexibility should be the rule. A bureaucratic rigidity mainstreaming all students with handicaps can be as destructive as a refusal to mainstream at all unless the quality of the instruction in mainstream classes is sufficiently high to allow the handicapped students to keep up.

In this connection, students can help each other. Experience teaches that this kind of self-help has rewards above and beyond the purely academic: The experience of non-handicapped youth working with those with handicaps can be invaluable to both and has no equal in terms of motivating all involved. That kind of interaction can be strengthened through mixing all students in intramural activities, including social events and sports.

Finally, the schools that do not utilize parents -- and some take the position that the less heard from parents, the better -- are missing a great resource of community support for the school and a particularly critical one for socially or emotionally deprived students. This may be particularly true for handicapped students, whose own parents often are hard put to cope with the multiple stresses on them.

The fact that most of the handicapped children at P.S. 213 do not live in the immediate area of the school is a disadvantage from their point of view. The involvement of parents in the schooling of handicapped youth is always important both to the parents and the youth. The parents of handicapped youth often have much to give and just as often are much in need of receiving.

If it is presumptuous to suggest models of various functions contributing to the education and training of handicapped youth, it would be more so to suggest a single model of parenting. All the same, there are lessons in the stories of the youth in this study which seem to veteran observers in the field to be worth underscoring.

There are three major parental relationships involved here: with the child; with the school; and with the outside community support system. We have seen how the natural fears of parents can impede the progress their children might have made and how over-protectiveness can be a serious negative. On the other side of the coin, observers agree that Mickey's parents provide a classic example of helpful involvement in their son's development from the earliest years.

They made up their minds to spend a lot of time with their cerebral palsied son. They used that time constructively, not to bind their son to them, but to prepare him for as much freedom from them as he could handle. They imbued in him principles of self-sufficiency. They supported him without coddling him. When it came time for Mickey to look actively for work, his father put out efforts to make sure that he got an opportunity. By then, Mickey was ready to do the rest.

Billy's foster parents exhibited many of those same qualities. Their decision to remove their son from the school for the deaf was based on two concerns: First, they wanted to integrate him more fully into their own home, to allow him to be more of a son to them and a brother to their other two sons; second, they wanted him to deal with the real "hearing" world before adulthood. It is no criticism of special schools to say that they are clearly not for every youth with a disability. The key question for parents who are considering this kind of de-institutionalization for their child may well be how much time and effort they are willing to spend providing the social and emotional supports that the institutions may have been supplying.

When Billy got back to Charlotte, his foster parents took an active interest in where he was assigned to school and participated fully in the development of his first and subsequent IEPs. They met his teachers and established their concern in a supportive rather than threatening way. They showed that they were willing to do their part to help the school deal with Billy's educational problems, the result in some part of his late start in school.

The support system available for parents of handicapped children is an advantage too often not understood by those parents. It can work to help solve the handicapped youth's problems and the school's problems, and it can work to help the parent.

Brent's mother and Mickey's father felt that the system in place to assist handicapped youth was not taking sufficient notice of their children. Mickey's father acted in the matter of job placement through Vocational Rehabilitation. Brent's mother felt that she had to get more help for her learning-disabled son from the school system. She took an aggressive role, writing letters to the office of the superintendent of schools, spending hours on the telephone, personally involving herself in the IEP process. Her attendance at a Barrier-Free Environment 504 Consumer's Workshop (reference to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) had made her something of a militant by her own lights. As she put it: "I know my son's rights." She became active in the Charlotte chapter of the Exceptional Children's Advocacy Council and has contributed not only to getting more help for her son but to the cause of handicapped youth in her area at large.

People are different, and this kind of advocacy is clearly not for every parent. The question always arises: At what point may support for one's child be seen by schools, training agencies, and employers as harassment, and thus become counterproductive? At the same time, with teachers and tools and know-how more in demand than in supply, it is clear that the youth whose parents are willing to speak out are in a more favorable position. It is also clear that parents who do speak out are the single biggest hope for influencing change that will benefit <u>all</u> handicapped youth.

This fact has made "closet collaborators" out of special education bureaucrats who serve the system and who at the same time feel strongly that they have not been given sufficient funds and staff to do the job properly. "Put it in writing," one such individual whispered to Brent's mother after a meeting of the ECAC in which she had spoken up for more attention to learning-disabled youth. "If you don't squeak, we don't hear you." It was clear to Brent's mother that the "we" referred not only to the local educational system, but to local, state, and even national political leadership as well.

But whatever the parental style, the support system can be made to work admirably for the parents themselves, and they are often the most in need.

Brent's mother was delighted to discover the existence in Charlotte of a local chapter of the Association of Children with Learning Disabilities. Without hesitation, she joined.

"I was at a point where I needed to talk with other parents who were in the same boat," she recalled. "I don't mean just parents with children who had handicaps, but children who were like Brent, who were learning-disabled. I can't tell you how much support I got just from talking with and listening to those parents."

With some, she became friends. All found themselves rather quickly involved in give-and-take sessions with school system employees, most of whom were sympathetic and supportive. Meeting informally, such groups of parents and school people often can prefigure changes in attitude and, eventually, in custom and even in law. Their influence for the good with the parents they serve is incalculable. "The big thing," says Brent's mother, "is to learn that you're not alone, that your problems are the problems others deal with, and that you are not really doing such a lousy job."

> Brent is propped up in a hospital bed, one leg in a cast and in traction. An automobile accident. Two other boys who were 'joy-riding' had forced the car in which Brent was riding off the road into a tree. That is Brent's version. His father, a fireman, got to the scene and pried open the door of a strange car to find his son bleeding and unconscious. Brent was lucky to get out of the wreck with nothing more serious than a broken leg. Now he is flashing a picture of the totalled car and talking with a visitor about his future. It is October, 1981, and he thinks that he is going to make it out of high school. That has not always been true? "No way. I guess around the eighth grade I looked around and saw all those years ahead and I was going nowhere with the books and I wanted to quit. I told my mother I wanted to quit, that I'd never make it... And now how time has flown by... Man, I thought I'd never get algebra. Failed the first semester and finally passed the second in LD. Took the first again in summer school, that was pretty easy. LD classes? Listen, they helped me a lot. The other classes

> didn't make sense. I couldn't relate to what was going on there. In the LD classes the teachers were more understanding." English still hacks him. "Words like you never heard before... I just couldn't get it right, couldn't remember them, couldn't pass the test." In the summer he had a job at Carowinds amusement park catering food. Now, though, he is thinking about college. Some colleges have six-year curricula designed for learning disabled youth, he is told. He does not react. He wants to learn how things work, not just mechanical things but "how the body works and the brain works."

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What elementary schools can do for handicapped youth, and what parents can do for them in those critical, formative years, is vitally important. But just as important are the decisions made at the secondary-school level. Increasingly, progressive school systems are focusing attention on the future of these children early in the high school years. Is college desired, and is it a real possibility? If not, what kind of vocational track makes sense for each individual -- will he or she be able to handle competitive employment, or is a sheltered workshop environment likely to be necessary? Finally, if competitive employment is the goal, can a good match be made between the skills it is possible for these youth to attain and the demands of the labor market?

Perhaps the most important thing after the attitude of the parent is the willingness of the school to bring its own expertise fully to bear on the educational and training problems it has inherited and to call on outside resources to complement its effort. Vocational teachers may need help understanding problems of handicapped youth; special education teachers may need help understanding vocational instruction; general teachers may need help in both directions. And somewhere beyond the range of the educators' grasp are the employers, who will or will not hire the non-college-bound graduates.

Michigan's interagency agreement, discussed in Chapter III, is one of the more progressive efforts in the nation to bring together the forces needed to help make it possible for handicapped youth to make the difficult transition from school to work. While the agreement is still just "on paper" in some Michigan communities, it has been converted to action in many others. One of the latter is Escanaba, a town of 20,000 on the Upper Peninsula, looking out at the Little Bay de Noc.

The high schools of the Delta Schoolcraft Intermediate District there do vocational tracking and training for handicapped youth the way it ought to be done -- with imagination, flexibility, and a willingness to try another way if the "book" way does not work. Bruce Carlson, special-needs coordinator for the district, credits the agreement for much of what is happening now. "When you have the state saying 'Here's the way to do this, we've worked it out and everybody agrees,' it gives the locals extra incentive. You know, everybody was supposed to work together before, but it didn't happen, and it's happening now."

What's happening is not earth-shaking, but it is substantial. There's a great deal more in-service training for regular high school teachers to help them prepare to deal with youth who have physical or mental handicaps. The 8 percent handicapped youth enrollment in Escanaba's high school population is not particularly high, but the only youth who do not get into the system are the severely handicapped, those not destined for competitive employment.

Assessment is done in the elementary schools, but the IEP is reviewed at the high school level with the usual complement of teachers and guidance counselors present and, often, with a Vocational Rehabilitation specialist on hand. "We'd have Voc Rehab there all the time if they had sufficient staff available and were not traveling," Carlson observes. The involvement of the Vocational Rehabilitation personnel brings the real world of work solidly inside the educational institution. The crucial high school years are spent developing skills tracks that will bring employment following graduation.

"We'll try anything that has a chance to succeed for these kids," Carlson says. "We make lots of lateral moves." Every handicapped youth is mainstreamed in the district high schools, but that does not mean that they do not get whatever special attention they need. "We try to provide that kind of attention for everyone who needs it, not only the handicapped kids," Carlson says.

In the youth's final year of high school, much of the responsibility for his future moves into the hands of Vocational Rehabilitation, which has responsibility under the Michigan interagency agreement for job placement of handicapped youth. At least six months before graduation, Vocational Rehabilitation assumes responsibility for eligible youth. During their last year, these youth are placed in what amounts to on-the-job training spots, for which credit toward graduation is awarded. Where more help is needed, local CETA programs are put to use, with Voc Rehab counselors serving as referral agents in the linkage. The point is: However it might be accomplished, a clear link is established between school and work for handicapped youth.

Placement figures are sometimes exaggerated, but officials in Lansing say that the Delta Schoolcraft Intermediate District was not exaggerating its claim of somewhere around 90 percent placements as recently as a year and a half ago. "Economic conditions are bad, and we're running closer to 70 percent than 90 percent now," Carlson says. Weakening economic conditions mean reduced budgets, which curtail travel for job development. Escanaba does not have all the jobs the graduating students need. "We should be getting over to Indiana, Ohio, but we don't have the money for it now," he notes.

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With the understanding developed earlier in this study that Vocational Rehabilitation does not have the funds to deal with the numbers of handicapped youth graduating from or otherwise leaving the public school system, the question arises of what role CETA and its successor -- the Job Training Partnership Act -- should play.

MDC's survey referred to in the previous chapter found that the biggest barrier to involvement in CETA was poor assessment, generally related to lack of real contact with the agencies working with handicapped individuals. In San Antonio, CETA programs have been overcoming that problem dramatically through a little relatively simple coordination and the use of an agency ordinarily associated with handicapped workers -- Goodwill Industries -- as the assessment arm for <u>all</u> incoming CETA participants.

The assessment program was the brainchild of Ken Daley, chief of planning for the San Antonio CETA consortium, who got the program off the ground in the fall of 1978 with the collaboration of Bob Blase, head of Goodwill. Daley's reasoning was simple: "The Goodwill people had a track record on assessment. I figured that they would benefit our CETA program by assessing everybody and that they would be most likely to spot individuals who needed special help -- after all, their clientele is handicapped."

That rationale is worth examination by anyone managing employment and training programs aimed at the economically disadvantaged or otherwise hard-to-employ. It begins with the remarkably sane assumption that the target population is not neatly divided into the categories of "handicapped" and "non-handicapped," however necessary that assumption may be for statistical purposes. In truth we know that any target population for service consists of individuals with problems of one sort or another scaling up from minor to serious; that a variety of different remediations are in order; and that the kind of attention fostered by individual assessment is a splendid way to begin -- particularly if the assessment personnel are well-trained and experienced.

"We use what we call the VR approach to assessment," Blase said. "That means individual attention." San Antonio Goodwill has been assessing for VR for years, and Blase welcomed the opportunity to get involved with the CETA system at large. "Although it's my opinion that the law treats these people as though they are folks who just don't happen to have a job, whereas they are suffering from serious problems of many different kinds."

Assessment at San Antonio Goodwill, which prides itself on being much more than a sheltered workshop, consists of a week's worth of team-oriented psychological, medical, and vocational testing. If any of this turns up a handicap which is likely to affect the individual's employability, he or she is sent over to Advocacy, the in-house handicapped service. There, a single counselor with the complete report is assigned to work with the individual. "First step is to help them understand what the handicap is and what we will help them do to get the most out of their ability to overcome it," Blase said. Contact is made with the Texas Rehabilitation

Commission ("We can get free equipment and books that way"), and a decision is made whether the individual is to receive training and/or placement at Goodwill, training elsewhere, or direct placement.

The advantages to handicapped youth and adults of such a system are obvious, but this CETA-Goodwill partnership goes beyond the point of merely passively performing assessment on whomever shows up. "We've actively recruited handicapped people," noted Elaine Dreyer, director of client services for Goodwill. "We did a campaign to let handicapped people know we were out there... We solicited the Texas Rehabilitation Commission to send us their kids... We visited the schools and told them we had to have handicapped kids. We set a goal of six percent for Advocacy."

Not surprisingly, the percentage of handicapped individuals assessed for service at San Antonio Goodwill has been high. For Fiscal 1982, for instance, a total of 2,100 individuals were assessed, of whom 25 percent were given special services for the handicapped.

While direct placement is a concern for the Goodwill-CETA effort only in cases where training is not prescribed, the organization has used the Employment Service as well as TRC for this purpose. Goodwill also utilizes its own network of employers to help place CETA clients. One of the most cooperative of those industries has been one run by a member of the Mayor's Committee on Employing the Handicapped.

"We've tried across the CETA programs for the handicapped to use the organizations and individuals who represent this group on councils in San Antonio," Daley said. Key individuals in this effort have included members of the CETA consortium's advisory and youth councils, the operating staff member of the city's handicapped access office, and other advocates. (It is noteworthy that these cadres of handicapped individuals -- more often than not mentally sharp but physically handicapped -- turn up behind the scenes wherever a particularly good program for the handicapped is located.)

Good assessment of handicaps has its frustrating aspects, however, unless it is closely tied to a vigorous training and job placement effort. "There is a need for a better match between the people and the training," Ms. Dreyer noted in a recent conversation. "We don't have the people to fit some of the slots out there, but the bigger problem is that there isn't nearly enough training for the people we do have."

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Developing training slots is, of course, the business of CETA and will be the business of the new Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. But where handicapped youth are concerned, finding good training and developing jobs is a business best conducted with the fullest cooperation of the agencies that have worked most closely with handicapped clients.

In reviewing the prime sponsor reports for the MDC survey discussed in Chapter IV, we noted that there was a close relationship between the success CETA prime sponsors had in bringing handicapped youth into their programs and the number of agencies listed under the question: "With what other agencies/programs do you work in providing services to handicapped youth?" The longer the list, the more successful the CETA program.

Lane County, Oregon, has a special-needs program in its panoply of training programs and regularly enrolls approximately 25 percent handicapped youth in its total enrollment. Like San Antonio Goodwill, Lane County utilizes other agencies in the community to help recruit handicapped youth. But in a special way, Lane County involves these agencies in the entire process from assessment to eventual job placement, and involves itself in the education and training of handicapped youth from the earliest point possible. The list of 15 agencies with which this CETA program regularly works includes the public school system and the community college system as well as virtually all of the agencies registered in Oregon to assist handicapped adults or youth. "The special-needs program is a working rather than paper relationship with all of the above mentioned agencies," the questionnaire form noted. "It is an active interagency sharing of clients to provide a comprehensive program to meet the social, vocational, and residential needs of the disabled."

The program is also one of the few CETA programs the author is acquainted with that makes its initial contact while handicapped youth are still in school. "We've been involved in developing IEPs along with the school people and Vocational Rehabilitation more than a few times," says John Cope, program services supervisor. Some work experience is available to handicapped youth as early as their sophomore and junior years in high school, and those efforts are supported by the prime sponsor's Summer Youth Employment Program which, in turn, feeds back into senior-year job placement.

Ideally, this education-training connection is enhanced upon graduation. A typical Lane County program described in the survey questionnaire is a kitchen training program which places mentally retarded clients at Lane Community College's cafeteria to develop appropriate work habits. The clients are then placed with a trainer in private-sector permanent jobs or in OJT.

The key individual in this CETA program for the handicapped is the special-needs coordinator, an individual trained in special education and knowledgeable about the opportunities available in the community. "Our special-needs coordinator works one-on-one with the mentally retarded," Cope says. "He works with local businesses in the community to provide a coworker for each of these trainees to stay for six to eight weeks to get them going. Actually, our special-needs coordinator works as much for Vocational Rehabilitation as he does for us."

Special-needs youth are mainstreamed into the Lane County job workshop program, a kind of job-club effort that builds self-motivation for job search. "It's a great confidence builder for them," Cope says. "If they develop good work habits and have confidence, usually the best training they can get is on the job -- there, the employer knows what he wants."

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> "First thing we do is to sit down with company officials and ask about their training techniques, see if they think they are having any problems. Then we describe our training techniques. Then we ask them if they would like to hire a person who stayed on the job for, say, four years and showed up every day and did the work and did not complain about it being boring. We never mention handicapped until it comes up. We say we are working with people who have been labeled handicapped and they are producing the kind of results we've described. The Motorola guy listened and said he didn't care if they had green and red stripes if they could do the job and keep coming to work."
>
> Dr. Darryl Townsend.

Simple things, fundamental things, first things are what often get overlooked in training programs. When Marc Gold, at the University of Illinois, began doing research into training techniques in 1969, he was already convinced that individuals labeled as handicapped could do much more than anyone thought. The more he broke down training into its elementary components, the more convinced he became. He began to formulate a system called "Try Another Way" which has been tested and produced results generally regarded as successful in a dozen sites around the country.

In Austin, Texas, the principles of the system have been applied in a series of demonstrations with Motorola. Dr. Darryl Townsend, director of systems development for Marc Gold and Associates, talked about how the first demonstration began in October of 1979. "CETA had tried to get a program with companies and had not been successful. With CETA funds ($150,000), we contracted to train and place 10 handicapped individuals with Motorola."

In one sense, the Austin program was selective. A total of 31 individuals were referred to the project by interested agency staff. Four were eliminated because they did not want full-time jobs. The remaining 27 were accepted for the MG&A assessment procedure. Fourteen who seemed most likely to succeed were selected to undergo training. But, first, the Marc Gold trainers themselves had to be trained in the jobs Motorola wanted filled. They spent six weeks learning the jobs they were going to teach and writing task analyses which described in specific detail each step necessary to accomplish the task.

From that work, what were called individual "habilitation" plans were drawn up for each of the participants. Generally, they spent three months in classroom on-site training learning tasks, jobs, and other work-related behavior necessary for employment. This was followed by three months of on-the-job training, during which time they performed as regular employees, receiving only the assistance necessary to ensure quality performance.

Ten of the original participants were actually hired as permanent, full-time employees. Most were employed between April and June of 1980. Between February and April, 1981, five of the group were dropped by Motorola. "They had high quality, but they could not get up to the speed needed for production," Townsend noted.

If $150,000 for a program resulting in five placements of a year's duration seems a high price, it's worth looking at the individuals who constituted that group and, second, at the benefit side of the cost-benefit equation. The 10 individuals finally placed at Motorola were all economically disadvantaged and handicapped -- most of them mildly to moderately mentally retarded. While most were adults (average age 29), none had previously held full-time jobs; eight had not finished high school; two were in state institutions and a third in a half-way house; eight were unemployed and the other two were in special education classes in school; and seven of the group were receiving public assistance.

Additionally, their IQs ranged between 35 and 75, although Townsend was quick to point out that MG&A pays little attention to IQs. "We've found little or no relationship between the IQ and what an individual can learn." All the same, this group was clearly one for which competitive employment in the private sector would not ordinarily be an option in this country in 1980-82.

For anyone used to dealing with "before" and "after" dollars in training programs, the results of the Motorola project are, to say the least, dramatic:

- Total pre-training income of the group of 10 was just $6,465, while the total pre-training public assistance was $68,743 -- more than ten times income.
- Total post-training earnings were $70,115 -- again, more than ten times the income prior to training.
- In place of the heavy bill for public assistance, the group of 10 paid $6,111 in federal taxes alone in the year after training.

- Even the group of four who took training but were not employed at Motorola showed dramatic improvement, with three of them employed, raising pre-training income for the group from $469 to $9,854 and cutting deeply into the $40,665 the four had received in public assistance.

While it is clear that these gains probably would be somewhat overstated in the first year, since half the group of 10 were later dropped by Motorola, it is equally clear that it would not take many years for the entire group to repay the cost of their training in reductions in the heavy subsistence payments they had been receiving.

Additionally, Motorola officials found the program directly beneficial in a different way. Writing in April, 1981, after a second phase of the training program involving six new trainees had begun, Dick Bond, assembly manufacturing manager for Motorola, noted these benefits: "Our Motorola trainers are working closely with the MG&A trainers... they have learned many of the specialized training techniques used by MG&A. We have adopted some of these techniques and are anxious to continue this learning experience... I am confident that our training methods for all new employees will be improved through this experience."

Anyone who has worked with programs attempting to reach the "hard-to-reach" will be familiar with this phenomenon. Having to find ways of simplifying instruction helps a teacher reach all students better.

Indeed, Townsend considers that the major benefit of the MG&A programs around the country has been the training of trainers. "We're down to four months in training a trainer to teach 'Try Another Way,'" he remarked late in 1981. At that time, the program was busy training instructors in 14 states.

At the same time, the Austin effort was redoubled with the second training group. "We learned a lot from the first time," Townsend said. "We got into areas that had too much judgment for our group to handle -- that's the hardest thing to train: judgment. So we've simplified the training some more." Out on the Motorola floor, J. B. Lofgreen, production manager, agreed. "We're all learning," he said. "I think we'll do better with the second group. I'm impressed overall with the quality of the people on both sides of the line -- the trainers and the trainees. This is good for Motorola."

A year later, late in 1982, four of the five remaining members of the first Austin group and five of the six members of the second group were still employed at Motorola -- one member of the second group having been terminated for violation of attendance policies. In December, 1982, MG&A reported a new CETA contract to train mentally retarded individuals for business and industry in the Austin area. "While we are attempting to focus our efforts on a variety of manufacturing occupations," wrote Nancy J. Rhoads for MG&A, "we are also working within a budget that will reduce our cost per placement by 50 percent as compared with previous employment projects funded by CETA."

* * * * *

Where Marc Gold and Associates have blazed a trail in the training and placement of the mentally retarded, The Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (Rusk Institute) in New York City has a long and distinguished track record in training and placement of the physically disabled. While the Rusk Institute aptly refers to its program as "total rehabilitation," it is the placement aspects of the program that we are most interested in here.

Work at the Institute in placement began as early as 1951, with the concern of Dr. Howard A. Rusk that rehabilitated patients viewed their approaching discharge to the world of work not with eagerness, but with anxiety. The Institute determined to approach businessmen in the city in the hope that they might become interested in the problem and be willing to open doors to employment opportunities.

Thus was born the Committee for the Specialized Placement of the Handicapped. Writing about it in 1971, the present director of placement services, Rosalind R. Zuger, noted: "Through the years its membership has increased to 25, representing large and small companies, legal firms, banks, manufacturers, insurance companies, retail stores, and a leading daily newspaper. It is a unique group -- men and women, important in their respective fields, meeting regularly to give voluntarily of their time and expertise to further the employment objectives of a severely disabled population."[57]

In 1980, Youthwork -- the Department of Labor- and foundation-funded corporation created to demonstrate ways to increase educational and vocational opportunities for young people -- chose the Rusk Institute as one site for a national demonstration of projects to serve disabled youth. With that grant, Ms. Zuger's placement service set about enriching the work it had been doing with services such as occupational seminars with guest faculty; employer seminars; transportation and environmental supports; advocacy skills; and peer counseling through the establishment of a student council.

In effect, the Youthwork grant enabled Ms. Zuger to enrich a placement program already doing outstanding work. Shortly after receiving the Youthwork grant in 1981, Ms. Zuger listed the two major placement problems as the familiar disincentive to work -- "there is not enough coordination of benefit with work to make it worthwhile for disabled people to work without losing certain benefits such as Medicaid and other family-related things" -- and transportation. She maintained that the country's only accessible mass transit for disabled people is in Washington and San Francisco. "New York means cabs or vans," she said, "and the cost can run to $160-$200 a week, far too costly for individuals who are probably not making that much per week. We encourage clients to drive as soon as they can get a job. But that's not a realistic expenditure for some... A salesman who needs his car to work gets a tax credit; a handicapped person does not."

Despite facing difficulties on this order, the Rusk Institute's program was cited by Youthwork as one of the best of its demonstrations. "This project achieved great success in placing 48 out of 50 participants in unsubsidized positions," Youthwork reported in October, 1982.[58]

Ms. Zuger, who has private industry background, feels strongly that the placement work at Rusk is duplicable elsewhere. "I don't think placing handicapped people in private sector business is the problem," she says. "The problem is getting our educational system to steer them toward marketable skills."

She maintains that the key to placement is the development of a confidence level on the part of the employer, and that this requires that the individual doing placement have confidence that the person he or she is trying to place really can do the job. "I call up to speak with the hiring people and it isn't enough to know that they have a spot for a secretary, I want to know how many phone calls the individual has to take in a certain time, how much filing to do how fast, lots of detail. Then I invite them to lunch and tell them that I would not refer anyone to them unless they would come to see them first. Then I offer to follow-up very closely on the placement. I have even offered to fire someone if they had to do that, but nobody ever has taken me up on that."

She believes that the Private Industry Councils (PICs) which emerged under CETA and now are presented as the centerpiece of local programming under the Job Training Partnership Act can serve the same function as has been served by her Committee for the Specialized Placement of the Handicapped. "If the person doing the placement will go to the Rotary Club, I don't care where, and meet with the officers and speak at their lunch meetings, that person can make a linkage between the program and the PIC members. The mistake CETA made is that they tried to do this with people who have a social training background only."

Much of the same thing done by Ms. Zuger in New York has been done nationally by a program called Projects with Industry, headquartered in Washington. In late 1981, Tom Fleming, head of PWI, claimed that it had placed 50,000 handicapped people in employment. "But as a nation we're still falling behind," he added. "For instance, around 250,000 people a year are rehabilitated by Vocational Rehabilitation, while annually 400,000 new clients go on SSDI."

Projects with Industry came into existence as a result of the 1968 Vocational Rehabilitation amendments. It actually got off the ground in 1970, and Fleming has been its sparkplug in recent years. In 1981, PWI had 100 projects including satellites affiliated with 5,000 businesses.

One of the most successful of PWI's programs was the one with the Electronic Industries Foundation. This group came into being as a result of a survey indicating that while most industry members had established some sort of contact with a rehabilitation agency, they were unable to handle the requests to look at clients from a multitude of other agencies. The industry created a council representing executives from industry plus public members to supervise hiring the handicapped. "It was the first nationally organized effort by industry to reach out to the disabled," says Carol Dunlap, national project director for EIF.

The model wherever EIF set up shop around the country was a small, executive advisory board which met periodically to review the program and make recommendations, and a larger employment council including representatives from industry directly responsible for hiring, plus rehabilitation personnel and placement people. In many cases the industry and rehabilitation people were meeting each other for the first time. Ms. Dunlap remembers an industry member stunning rehabilitation people by describing the approach he wanted: "Don't tell me that your man can't lift 30 pounds; tell me that he can lift 29 pounds."

In 1978, EIF applied for Title III CETA funds and began its national program. By January, 1983, the program had gone over 1,700 placements in more than 500 participating companies. Salaries ranged from $7,000 to $42,000 a year and covered some management positions. While the foundation continues to work with electronics industries, the program is offered to others in the geographical areas selected and has enjoyed great popularity with other local business and industry. "The key thing," Ms. Dunlap said, "is that business or industry must perceive the program as its own. Only then does it have a chance to take hold. And it must be their program. Once we get an industry started, we back off and leave it to them."

* * * * *

For all of the emphasis in this volume on competitive employment, there are those handicapped individuals for whom that will never be a real possibility. But for them, work may be even more important than it is for the rest of us; for it may fulfill a need often deeply and painfully frustrated in the past.

Whether the work setting is institutional in the sense that it involves living-in, or is strictly daytime, work must have some rewards. The sheltered workshop approach examined critically in Chapter IV is not flawed conceptually, but only in some practice. Sheltered workshops providing real work and fair pay are a necessity in the present system. There are good ones, and they generally tend to do some of the same things well. It is not necessary to advance the Nevins Center in Charlotte as a model for all sheltered workshops to say that it performs those essentials very well.

The center's clients are severely and moderately retarded individuals, most of them with other problems of one sort or another. It is worth examining a little of the center's history to grasp how recent have been such advances as this client group has achieved. The building in which Nevins is housed is the oldest standing school building in Mecklenburg County, dating back to the last century. It burned once and was rebuilt by the neighborhood. When it became the site of the school system's training program for MRs, the neighborhood held square dances to provide the money to renovate the building.

That was in 1959, less than 25 years ago. Before that time, mentally retarded individuals were kept on the farm or hidden away in institutions. At that time, only one pediatrician in Mecklenburg County would deal with mentally retarded youth. Even after Nevins was converted to its present use, the program was run by a minister who took a part-time salary and used volunteers. The first fully paid staff arrived at Nevins in 1970 -- just thirteen years ago.

Until recently, working with a severely disabled clientele, Nevins was regularly placing around 20 percent of its population in competitive employment. "The percentage of employables has risen over recent years," says Ricky R. Dancy, executive director. Not, he believes, because of any change in the degree of impairment or anything that goes on in Nevins, but because of programs for handicapped youth such as the one described in Chapter III at the Charlotte Metro Center. "By the time they get here (at age 17-18) they are better prepared for work and for getting along with others than they would have been, say, 10 years ago."

Nevins largely serves a clientele for which there is no "bottom" wage as described in Chapter IV. As required by the United States Department of Labor, Nevins determines the prevailing wage for a piece of work, estimates an average time for completion of the task through getting its own non-handicapped staff to "practice" the work, and prorates salaries according to the productivity of each client. "For instance," says Dancy, "the prevailing base pay for cutting cloth to make laundry bags is $3.84. If we determine that the average non-handicapped individual can make 50 in an hour and one of our workers makes half that many, he gets half of $3.84."

Dancy says that the average client at Nevins does approximately 28 percent of the non-handicapped standard work. The Nevins board has set a minimum pay for the center of 33 cents an hour. "We've got people out here who would make less than a penny an hour if we went strictly according to the rules," Dancy states.

One of the reasons Nevins has done so well moving its mentally retarded clientele into competitive employment is that it succeeded in getting Vocational Rehabilitation funds some years back to build a cafeteria. Not only does the cafeteria take care of the needs of Nevins' population of 200; it also serves as a training ground for employment in restaurant trades. "We've placed as many as 21 a year out of that cafeteria," Dancy says.

Other work training aspects at Nevins are scattered throughout the main building and serve as occupations for those who are not going on to competitive employment as well as for those who are. One shop assembles telephones, makes bank bags, and puts together packages of screws and bolts for furniture. There are other shops for horticulture, woodworking, and metal-working. A walk through Nevins with Dancy is punctuated by one interruption after another as clients stop their work to exchange smiles and a few words with him. The atmosphere is almost one of family cottage industry.

"We're at capacity now and we're not going to get any bigger. Right now if I had to, in an emergency, I could take any one of these folks to their homes. I've been in most all of them. If we had 500 or even 400 clients that wouldn't be possible."

While there is a regular five-day workweek, Thursday and Friday afternoons are set aside for recreation. "MRs have more leisure time and less capability of handling it," Dancy says. "We're trying to teach them how to use their time, typically bowling -- keeping score and paying for bowling -- when you do that you're not an MR to a bowling alley owner, you're a patron."

Nevins' clients do even better than the national average in job retention. Eighty percent of those who go out into competitive employment stay there. Sometimes, the "stickability" of these MRs surprises even Dancy:

"I dropped in at a restaurant where one of our people had been placed and got to talking with the owner recently. He said that times were hard and that he had had to lay off a couple of workers. I felt bad because I was sure that one of the layoffs would be our person, who had been hired last. I assumed that. The restaurant owner said, 'That's what you get for assuming.' He had fired two non-handicapped people who didn't get to work on time every day and work hard like our client did."

Still, times are different today, times are hard. The 20 percent turnover to competitive employment is not possible in the current recession. "We're down to more like 9 percent now," Dancy says. "All I can say is that I hope the economy brightens and we can get back to what we were able to do before."

VI. Running Hard to Stand Still

In January of 1982, Harper's published an article by Roger Starr of the editorial board of the New York Times entitled "Wheels of Misfortune." The article took the position that handicapped individuals did not have any special "rights" as a result of their condition and suggested that they would have to compete for heavy costs of rehabilitation with other social concerns that might be more pressing. Starr concluded: "In establishing federal standards for the treatment of handicapped children, just as in the case of establishing federal standards for transporting handicapped people of all ages, the national government has put its name on an obligation it simply cannot meet."

Predictably, the article brought in response a number of indignant letters, some of which the magazine dutifully published along with Starr's response. But the significance of the exchange lay not so much in its content as in the context of the times in which it was held. For in that same month -- on January 27, 1982 -- the Department of Justice circulated unpublished draft guidelines for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act that most advocates of the handicapped considered a threat to the historic gains they had made over the preceding decade.

Section 504, as noted previously, dealt with efforts to end discrimination against handicapped individuals in institutions receiving federal funds and in businesses with federal contracts. The changes proposed by DOJ, which had been given responsibility for coordinating implementation of 504, were seen as weakening the impact of the law on those fund recipients in serious ways. Most significantly, the proposed changes would make it necessary for the complainant to prove intent to discriminate --

often difficult to do; delete the word "appropriate" from the guarantee of education for the handicapped; and provide a loophole for a fund recipient to exclude a handicapped person if the person's participation could cause "undue burden on a recipient or other beneficiaries." Advocates of handicapped rights feared that this could be applied to a cerebral palsied person's speech slur, for instance, on grounds that other students (or co-workers) could be held back by it.

But the regulatory changes were really taken as only a warning shot. Down the road, advocacy groups saw a full-fledged attack on the newly won positions of the handicapped. "It is expected that the Administration will introduce legislation to repeal (Public Law) 94-142 in its entirety or to repeal some of the key provisions of the law," one advocacy journal noted.[59/] That same article expressed the fear that the Administration planned to cut funds for 94-142 by up to 30 percent, "which could result in some states choosing not to participate at all." Finally, the writer expressed concern that the Department of Education would be eliminated -- "with this proposal, most education programs would be turned back to the states."

This was the atmosphere of concern that existed in the handicapped advocacy community when Starr's article in Harper's was being circulated. Cheston T. Mottershead, chairman of the International Year of the Disabled Person for North Carolina, got Starr and Frank Bowe to agree to a debate as part of an IYDP conference in Greensboro in February. Starr elaborated the positions taken in his article. "Rights is a tricky word," he said, noting that Bowe had written that the Supreme Court had affirmed the "rights" of handicapped individuals. "But the Constitution says that all moneys spent by the government come as the result of bills originating in the House of Representatives, and you need a popular majority to get this or that piece of money... The right doesn't exist except as a decent society provides it within its economic ability." He concluded by warning advocates not to argue that an effort could "pay for itself."

Bowe, a deaf man whose books and articles on the subject of the status of handicapped individuals in American society are widely quoted, disposed of the "rights" issue in brief, referring to the legislation and court rulings of recent years as evidence of "a decent society proceeding according to priorities which we have decided are rights." On the subject of the cost of helping handicapped individuals move into the mainstream of American life, he challenged Starr directly and forcefully.

"You justify these things," he said of decisions to assist in employment of handicapped individuals, "because it is more economical than not to do it. I am an example. If I had not worked last year, I would have collected $10,000 in federal taxes. I did work, and I paid instead $10,000 in federal taxes. I am one person. There are millions of people in my situation... To my mind the question is how can we justify spending what we are spending -- $50 billion a year on handicapped people, and of that almost $47 billion is on federal assistance... cash subsidies (Medicare, SSI, etc.) and only $2.5 billion on getting education for them or jobs for them. That's $25 in handouts for every dollar spent making them productive. The question is not whether we can afford to help the handicapped get jobs, but can we afford not to... I say we can't."

Naturally enough, it was Bowe who drew the applause after the debate. The mood was one of concern, but also one of commitment. "We'll be up all night organizing," said one young non-handicapped woman who had become an advocate working out of the state CETA office. "It's now or never."

This was the prevalent attitude in the workshops. There were frequent references to the threats abroad. A workshop advertised as dealing with "coalition building" became instead a focal point of organizing to protest the proposed regulation changes. "The house is burning down," said the workshop leader, "and we haven't got time to talk about building coalitions. We have to organize to protest right away. They are trying to cut the heart out of 94-142 and they are trying to destroy the effectiveness of 504 completely."

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By April, candlelight vigils were being held all over the country protesting the changes proposed for 504 and those rumored to be in the works for 94-142. As before, the sense of crisis tended to galvanize the community of advocacy for people with handicaps, bringing new people on to the stage. One such person was Sherry Lovette of Wilmington, North Carolina, who had been chosen Miss North Carolina Wheelchair for 1982 and who found herself, for the first time in her life, organizing a public protest.

Ten years earlier, she had been a teacher in Chapel Hill, with a husband in medical school at the University of North Carolina. Then one morning, on her way to work, there was an automobile accident and she came out of the hospital in a wheelchair. By her own account, it took her three and one-half years to get herself together and back in the classroom. When the family moved to Wilmington, she "retired" from teaching. She became interested in the problems faced by individuals similarly handicapped, but she was no advocate. Not, that is, until the International Year of the Disabled Person conference in Greensboro:

> I was thrown in with a lot of people who were active, pros you might say. Andi Reynolds (staff person for a state CETA council subcommittee on handicapped affairs) was there, and she asked me to do this thing. A friend and I started calling people, TV and news folks too. Funny thing. I called the police to get a permit. They said fine, come down and get it and I said, oh, I know your building and it's not accessible and the police said they would send someone and I could sign at home. They were very good about it. We decided to have the meeting in the park across from the federal building. People started gathering about 7:30 -- maybe 85-100 people, parents and children, two television people. It was a beautiful evening, just starting to turn dark, the river in front of us, the heavy granite federal building behind us and we all had candles... the wind was blowing and we had to huddle together to keep the candles from blowing out. I started off, you know, why we're gathered here to think about the problems the United States Justice Department is causing us. It was hard for me to do because the television and newspaper people were all over me. I felt very unprepared... So many more people were there who had been in this for a long time and had technical knowledge of 504. Mine had only come from talking with people and some reading... Anyway I got through all right... I'll tell you what impressed me. It was the desperation of those people there who had children with handicaps. One parent with a mentally and physically handicapped child came over to me later and she was really upset. Here is her child in school and the child barely coping and the school barely coping with the able-bodied kids and she has been getting help from government agencies and she doesn't know what she is going to do now or where she is going to go. She can't handle the expenses she has now, so private school is not the answer. What is she to do?

The cost issue was raised again and again in those vigils around the country, but those who were looking hard could see that it had two faces. One stared back at the parents who could ill afford to pay for private treatment. The other was there for any taxpayers who cared to look. "Let me remind you," Tony Mulvihill, father of a blind, two-and-one-half-year-old child in Durham, North Carolina, told a similar vigil gathering, "that the Morehead School (a statewide resource for educating blind children) costs about $10,000 per pupil per year." He added that a bed at the Murdoch

Center in Butner, an institution for the mentally retarded, costs $85 a day.60/

This time, the protests were not for the short run but for the longer term, keyed to specific purposes down the road. By June the candlelight vigils had given way to "white ribbon" days. These new demonstrations were modeled after one staged on June 3 in front of the Department of Justice building in Washington by DOJ employees protesting the proposed 504 changes. The date was chosen because it marked the anniversary of the first day of mandated compliance with the very regulations that were being called into question. Recipients of federal funds had been given three years (from June 2, 1977, to June 2, 1980) to come into compliance with the 504 regs, which now -- never having been in force -- were to be rewritten. The commitment of these demonstrations was to wear white ribbons, as one bulletin put it, "until 504 has been retained as it currently exists."

It is easy to recognize here the revolutionary fervor exemplified by the seizure on significant dates and the adoption of symbols of resistance, but in truth two waves of strong feeling were moving in opposite directions. On June 28, the Supreme Court handed down a ruling which seemed to many to represent the thinking of the "backlash" against advances made in the name of and by handicapped individuals.

The decision was in the case of a deaf girl, Amy Rowley, who had petitioned for a sign language interpreter in a public school. A lower court had ruled that while she was making progress in school, she only understood about 59 percent of what was said in her class and thus was not receiving a "free and appropriate education," since, without an interpreter, she did not have "an opportunity to achieve (her) full potential commensurate with the opportunity provided to other children."

By a 5-3 majority (Justice Blackmun providing a separate, concurrent opinion) the Supreme Court overruled the lower court. The majority held that handicapped children do not have a right to an education that would "maximize their potential" for learning, but only to "services which are individually designed to provide educational benefit."

Amy Rowley was receiving "educational benefit," the Court's majority ruled, because she was progressing with passing grades. The minority of three (Justices White, Marshall, and Brennan) argued that "educational benefit" falls far short of what the Act intended. They maintained that the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 requires a special education program "intended to eliminate the effects of the handicap, at least to the extent that the child will be given an equal opportunity to learn if that is reasonably possible."

It is important to note that the Court did not rule out the need for school systems to provide interpreters in instances where hearing-impaired children require them to benefit from their educational placement, and that the Court did take into account that her school had provided a hearing aid and a tutor for Amy Rowley. Despite that, and despite a generally moderate reaction from such advocacy journals as the National Center of Law and the Deaf (NCLD), the decision was taken by many advocates as a setback for the cause of handicapped children, the more so as it was the first decision handed down by the Court on P.L. 94-142.

"It's true that the majority upheld some of the most basic tenets of the law," said Gary Beene, director of the Charlotte Community Service Center's Council for the Hearing Impaired. "But it is also true that Rowley ost the case and that seems to me to be the overwhelming reality." In a letter to the Charlotte Observer, Beene found irony in the Court's having ruled in the same month that the states must offer exemplary free public education to the children of illegal aliens -- "many of whom will require interpreters, personalized instructors and special services" -- but had not seen fit to extend similar benefits to a deaf American child.[61]

Whatever the meaning of the Rowley case, the decision was welcomed by a considerable group of public officials and private citizens who, for one reason or another, have come to feel that spokesmen for handicapped people have gone too far in attempting to redress wrongs. That attitude has been voiced in various ways, but rarely in language as blunt as that of one of Harper's readers who wrote to praise Starr's article: "Public schools, buildings, and transportation," that individual wrote, "are being held hostage by the handicapped special interest group, which probably is out of touch with the wishes of its members and probably is more in touch with the grantsmanship-funds generation. My local supermarket has six parking spaces reserved for the handicapped and I have never seen a wheelchair in the grocery."

While this view may represent the extreme, there is a considerable body of opinion that holds that handicapped advocates want "too much, too soon." That view often gains new supporters because of the utterances of the most demanding of the advocates, who are by inclination no more reasonable than the extreme leadership of other minority causes fostered in recent years in this country. "I think a lot of people began to worry," says one professional working for employment of the handicapped, "when handicapped people, who had been given special parking places, began to agitate for free parking where others had to use the meters. Personally I have no sympathy for this idea. The trouble is that concentration on this kind of relatively minor thing -- or on the demands some people seem to be making to reconstruct whole transportation systems -- takes away from the very real discrimination that has been operating against disabled people for as long as anyone can remember."

Some of this backlash psychology clearly informed efforts to modify existing, recently enacted legislation that helped the cause of disabled individuals in school and in the workplace. But while it had a current of popular support, the far stronger current was made up of continuing efforts on behalf of the disabled -- and particularly efforts by parents of handicapped youth on behalf of their children.

* * * * *

On August 3, 1982, Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell placed in the Federal Register the proposed new regulations for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142). In a news conference, Bell stressed that the changes would be beneficial because they would give the states more discretion. Besides, he said, they were only tentative, and they could be changed after the 90-day comment period. Ten hearings were scheduled around the country to take comment.

Warning flags were up the next day. The Washington Post story seized upon aspects of the changes that would allow schools to remove "disruptive" (their quotes) handicapped children from regular classrooms. The newspaper also quoted Reese Robrahn, executive director of the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, as describing the changes as "pretty disastrous;" and Laura Pawle, an organizer in the Maine Association of Handicapped Persons, as saying that the proposals were an invitation for schools to exclude students in wheelchairs or those who are blind or have other disabilities.[62]

The Post reporter, Nicholas D. Kristof, attempted to describe the atmosphere of suspicion at the press conference. "Many activists in the rights for the handicapped movement...," he wrote, "do not trust the Administration to uphold their interests. President Reagan last year tried unsuccessfully to cut by 25 percent the $1 billion in aid for education to the handicapped." The reporter added a final note which boded ill for the effort to return powers to the states. "These activists," he wrote, "are even less trustful of local school districts, and they strongly oppose giving more discretion to school administrators."

The proposed changes were generally treated in six categories. They are as below, with some reaction from the Children's Defense Fund, which came out with an attack on the proposals the next day -- August 5.[63]

(1) Requirements that schools must have parents' written consent to educational plans for their children would be eliminated. "In addition, to the deletion of parental consent to a pre-placement evaluation," CDF noted, "parental consent would no longer be required before a child is initially placed in a special education program."

(2) Placements in the "least restrictive environment" as close as possible to the mainstream of school life, with a full range of possible treatments now required under the regulations, would be left to the school districts. "Finally," CDF noted, "the proposed regulations would permit school officials to weigh the 'disruptive' impact upon non-handicapped children of placement of a handicapped child in a regular educational activity."

(3) Related medical services from the schools, including eyeglasses, insulin injections, or other medication, would become optional instead of mandatory. Commented CDF: "The proposed regulations would no longer require schools to administer any medication to a handicapped child, barring some epileptic or diabetic children from attending school."

(4) Federal 30-day deadlines by which states must evaluate a child and set up Individualized Education Programs would be eliminated, with states held only to "reasonable time limits." Expanded timelines for hearings and administrative appeals "...would afford educational bureaucracies increased opportunities for delays," CDF noted.

(5) Evaluation personnel would no longer be required to attend all meetings with parents on the education plans for their children, as they had been. Additionally, noted CDF, "IEPs would not have to be actually drafted at IEP meetings; in fact, the proposed regulations permit their writing at some future, unspecified date."

(6) The definition of "qualified personnel" for dealing with handicapped youngsters would be deleted, raising fears among parents that decisions might be made by anyone who happened to be handy.

How these proposed changes would be viewed clearly depended on how the viewer assessed the sense of responsibility to handicapped youth of state school systems and the individual local schools. If the schools could safely be entrusted to look after the best interests of their handicapped students, the proposed changes would amount to little more than the elimination of paperwork and the streamlining of the educational process for those students. If not, the possibility that handicapped youth might suffer setbacks was real.

Some members of the advocacy support system tended to downplay the importance of the proposed changes. "They were not dramatic, and, whether one agreed with them or not, they were at least arguable," one such individual noted privately. "Whatever they said had very little to do with the emotional reaction that occurred when they were published in the Federal Register."

Clearly the most explosive issue raised by the proposed regulations was that of parental involvement. As we saw in Chapter I, parental involvement in writing IEPs has never been strong. The American Foundation for the Blind saw the new regulations as further diminishing that involvement.[64]

> "This changes the IEP process from a cooperative meeting of parents and professionals working and thinking together to a mere gesture of parent involvement. One of the biggest problems with IEPs has been the number of parents who were given a completed IEP to sign when they came to the meeting in the expectation that they would simply rubber-stamp their approval: this new regulation only gives the school the okay to keep doing it... Writing down phone calls and making carbon copies of letters may increase paperwork, but it also assures that parents will know about the IEP meeting, even if they decide not to come. Under the proposed regulations, 'reasonable attempts' to contact parents could mean two unanswered phone calls -- and the school could go ahead and hold an IEP meeting without you."

Even before the hearings began, the proposed regulations were in deep trouble in Congress. In a hearing before the Subcommittee on the Handicapped of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, Republicans as well as Democrats took potshots at them.[65] Senator Robert T. Stafford (Republican, Vermont) told Secretary Bell and others that the proposed regulations "...would seriously erode the rights and protections afforded handicapped children and their parents." Senator Dan Quayle (Republican, Indiana) said that he was concerned that some schools would interpret "disruptive behavior" too loosely, perhaps deciding that a child in a wheelchair was a case in point. He, too, argued that parental involvement in the education of handicapped children would be reduced.

But the harshest critic was subcommittee chairman Senator Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. (Republican, Connecticut). He said that he was suspicious of the intent of the regulations because the Administration, to date, had "sought to gut special education," urging reductions of up to 30 percent. "Now," said the chairman, "we are being told that the same people who asked us to decimate the law and to slash the funding are selling a regulatory rewrite as an improvement for the disabled. We shall see today whether that is the case or whether the Administration is attempting to do by regulation what it has been unable to do in Congress: To eliminate our nation's system of special education."

However harsh, these words captured the spirit of the debate: The issue was one of good faith. Senator Weicker spoke for thousands of parents of handicapped children whose letters of protest began to pour in to the office of Secretary Bell. The protest took vocal form in the public hearings. The one held in Washington was typical. "People were crying and screaming," recalled Paul Hippolitus of the President's Commission on Employment of the Handicapped. "It was hard to get through any individual's comments without tears. It was an emotional affair -- one advocate who has worked for years for handicapped people was called a turncoat."

On September 29, Bell appeared before the Subcommittee on Select Education, House Committee on Education and Labor, and withdrew the major recommendations of the proposed regulations. "According to testimony received at the hearings on our proposed regulations," he said in a statement, "the impression is widespread that we are diminishing the basic rights of handicapped children through these proposals. It is essential that we establish at the outset of this testimony, and for the record, the extensive protections of these rights that have been maintained in our proposed rules." Bell said that the Department of Education had received over 25,000 comments through the mail. The Washington Post story emphasized the political aspects of the matter. "There were so many protests that (Administration officials) were afraid it would have an impact on the elections," a member of the California Commission on Special Education was quoted as saying.66/

Still, Bell didn't manage to satisfy everyone at the hearing. He insisted that some "technical or editorial" changes might yet be made in the regulations. Representative George Miller (Democrat, California) responded: "It's your sense of 'technical changes' that got us into this problem (applause)... Before this law, these wonderful local people on the school boards were locking these children up in basements and closets... Rights were vested in the states before this law, and they didn't do a damn thing for these students!"

On November 3, the Department of Education published in the Federal Register a "Modification of Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" in which the six areas of proposed changes in the regulations were withdrawn. In the meantime, other changes considered as onerous to many advocates for handicapped youth -- such as the rewrite of Section 504 -- simply vaporized and were heard from no more. A knowledgeable observer of the scene described the routing of the effort to modify the legislation by new regulations as "a significant moment in history for handicapped people."

However that may be, the powerful counterforce assembled against the proposed changes had to do with more than the wording of those changes.

It had to do with the perception on the part of advocates for handicapped individuals and parents of handicapped children that the Administration was attempting to roll back the clock to darker days before any legislation availed their children protection. It had to do, too, with cutbacks in budgets and personnel for social programs which had been mounting for many months and which were hacking away at the modest programs that had been in recent years put in place to serve handicapped adults and youth.

Indeed, the cuts in social programs seemed to many to have been felt, first, in programs for the handicapped. Some of this came from the last-hired, first-fired principle, since programs for the handicapped were generally among the most recent added to the employment and training panoply. For whatever reason, support of this general view was offered by the situation at a number of the better programs surveyed by MDC originally in the summer of 1981. Follow-up calls early in 1983 indicated that most of those programs were suffering from cutbacks of one sort or another and from the faltering economy. Also, there were fears that the Job Training Partnership Act, which was to go into effect October 1, would further reduce training opportunities for handicapped youth both because of its 15 percent limitation on funds for administration; and because of its abandonment of the provision in the CETA amendments of 1978 which declared all handicapped youth eligible for training services, whether or not they were economically disadvantaged. A telephone survey of some of the better programs treated in this report turned up varying degrees of concern:

- Sinking from a staffing level of 23 in 1981, the San Antonio program in which Maria had participated (Bexar County Labor Community Agency) bottomed at a low of three staffers in 1982. Director Tinker Legg left to return to teaching, citing "devastating" funding problems. Her successor died of a heart attack, and his successor, Charles Kowald, was not sure that it made sense for him to try to continue to run the agency in 1983 with six staff members. "I'm not sure I really want to make it past October," he said. "You can't run programs for handicapped youth at the same administrative level you run other youth programs. Fifteen percent for administration just isn't enough for our kind of program. With the size program we've got, I would be the total administrative expense allowed."

- Over at CETA in San Antonio, Ken Daley echoed Kowald. "Our office has taken more cutbacks than most of the agencies have," Daley said. "The picture for handicapped kids may be a little grim. I don't know how we're going to be able to help them when the new law limits us in doing work experience. The 70-30 split (70 percent must be spent for training in all JTPA programs, while 30 percent goes -- 15 percent each -- to support services and administration) is bad news for handicapped programs, but so are the limitations on work experience. With handicapped kids, work experience is very important, and work experience is for all practical purposes abolished by the Act. We've tried to keep up our programs for handicapped kids, but we've been coasting down with the funding cutbacks."

- The Lane County, Oregon, CETA program, which had customarily involved far more handicapped youth than the average CETA program (of the 400 Summer Youth Employment Program participants in 1982, one of four was handicapped), was preparing to gear down sharply. "We are looking for changes in 1983," said John Cope, program services supervisor for Lane County CETA, "and they will be for the worse. We're not serving mentally handicapped youth at all any more. We're trying to maintain services for orthopedically disabled youth. Our funding level will go from $3.2 million to $1.6 million on October 1."

- Despite the untimely death of Marc Gold, the Try Another Way Programs such as the one described in Austin, Texas, in Chapter V were continuing, but struggling against the tide of reduced public funding.

- Several programs made specific reference to problems of placing handicapped youth in jobs when the national unemployment rate was above 10 percent. Nevins Center in Charlotte, as noted before, had dropped from a 20 percent to a 9 percent turnover into unsubsidized employment for its sheltered worker population. Even so intensive a program as the Electronic Industries Foundation effort with mentally handicapped individuals was suffering. "We're maintaining," said director Carol Dunlap. "But we were off 4.8 percent in placements for 1982 compared to 1981."

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Overall, advocates seem generally agreed that the loosening or withering of the federal role in favor of a "let the states do it" approach to the education and training of handicapped youth is bad news. How bad, however, is a matter for some debate. If there is any area of agreement, it is that the past year has been a defensive struggle to prevent loss of territory gained over a number of years of concerted effort.

In some areas, as we have seen, that struggle has succeeded. In others, it has not. "Ground has definitely been lost on the matter of compliance," says one veteran observer. "The practice of federal compliance officers traveling around and landing on school systems, employers, whomever for failure to comply was halted practically the day the Administration came into office, based on the idea that the states had the authority to do that."

The fact that the states have generally done nothing of the kind is offered as further proof by those who believe that the shift of authority from the federal government to the states amounts to an abandonment, rather than a redirection, of responsibility. But how serious is the loss of monitoring in terms of progress made by handicapped youth? Paul Hippolitus of the President's Commission, for one, is unsure. On the one hand, he argues, the four-five years of education that parents of handicapped youths have had has helped them understand the rights of their children. "These parents are the front-line monitors," he says. On the other hand, he feels that the absence of monitors has hurt because the parents do not have them as a support potential.

Brent's mother, who saw him assigned a special education teacher shortly after a monitoring visit by federal compliance officers (Chapter 1), has no ambivalence on the subject. "Whatever I've been told, I'll always believe that there was a connection between that compliance visit and my son finally getting some attention."

Then there is the money crunch, which has had deleterious effects on programs for handicapped children as noted here. In the view of many advocates, the mainstreaming of handicapped youth into regular school programs, which they worked for and prized as a victory hard-won, too often merely provides educational administrators in these times with a way of saving money by "dumping" handicapped youth into regular classes without consideration of any special needs they may have.

Finally, there is the Job Training Partnership Act, which looms ahead, at this point with far more minuses than pluses showing up front. It may be that the increased involvement of the private sector and such structural gains as the suggested seating of vocational rehabilitation representatives on the State Job Training Coordinating Council and the local PICs will prove sufficiently advantageous to make up for the Act's weaknesses as regards handicapped individuals; but that does not seem to be a good bet in the summer of 1983.

In one respect, handicapped youth have clearly lost ground with JTPA. The Act makes disabled adults -- but not disabled youth -- eligible simply by virtue of their disability. To be eligible for services under JTPA, disabled youth must also be economically disadvantaged. There is a slight loophole through which handicapped youth might be enrolled at a level of up to 10 percent of total enrollment without proof of economic disadvantage, but that catchall category also includes ex-offenders and others, and there is no way to know how much handicapped youth will get from it.

Indeed, there is reason to doubt that handicapped youth will be enrolled in JTPA in numbers even equal to their enrollment in CETA. As we have seen, the tendency of CETA programs seems to have been to enroll handicapped minorities at a rate well below the enrollment level of non-handicapped minorities. Even while increasing their overall employment of handicapped adults and youth -- as we have seen -- they apparently have tended to avoid the double handicap of minority status and disability.

To expect JTPA, with virtually no direction or priority from the federal level, to take on this task now is to expect a great deal. What is more likely is that the numbers of handicapped youth in JTPA will remain at CETA's latter-day levels -- or drop.

There are other reasons that may happen. As we have noted, JTPA makes two other changes that could be significant in restricting enrollment of handicapped youth. One is the virtual abandonment of work experience in favor of training. Whatever the arguments against work experience for non-handicapped clients of employment and training programs, they do not apply in the case of handicapped youth. Those young people often need work experience more than anything else such programs might offer -- indeed, it is often the only real opportunity they have for entering the world of work.

Then there is the 70/30 percent split JTPA mandates between training and administrative-support costs. Again, whatever the arguments for that restriction on administrative costs -- and many CETA professionals would challenge its validity as being too restrictive even to apply across the board to programs for the non-handicapped -- they do not apply to programs for handicapped youth. Such programs require more administration, more care and nurturing from the top, more people involved who bring qualifications that tend to increase administrative cost. Limiting administrative costs to 15 percent may put many kinds of programs for handicapped youth beyond the reach of program operators.

Finally, there is the matter of performance standards. If the performance standards set for JTPA were the kind that attempted to measure program success in terms of money saved taxpayers in support payments and increased taxes paid by the clients -- and if programs were funded on the basis of how well they performed here -- handicapped adults and youth might well be prized recruits. As we have seen, because of the high cost of maintaining disabled people who do not work, the economic reward of successful training programs can be great. But performance standards are not likely to be that sophisticated for some time to come. They are presently planned to focus on "placement rate" or "cost per placement" at first, and by those measures, programs may be more than ever likely to pass over the handicapped as a poor risk.

If all this happens -- if JTPA slows down or reverses the slow and painful progress handicapped individuals have made over the past decade in gaining entry into employment and training programs -- a great opportunity will be lost. For with all that remains to be done to equalize opportunity for disabled youth during the years of their education, the real battleground for the future is in the field of employment.

Nowhere in American life is there a more dramatic waste of human potential than that which results from the stunting of the worklives of handicapped individuals. Two things are apparent in that regard. First, the costs in human and economic terms are incalculable. No argument stands against Frank Bowe's conclusion that the cost of rehabilitating those handicapped individuals who can be assisted in obtaining unsubsidized jobs is less than the cost of continuing to support them in and out of institutions. That is true even if we choose to look at the matter solely in terms of dollar-and-cents economics, turning away from the psychological damage done when an individual who could do useful work cannot find that useful work to do.

The dollars-and-cents argument by itself, however, should be enough. Study after study cited in this report supports that view. Furthermore, it appears that the return to the American taxpayer in hard dollars increases in proportion to the severity of the disability overcome for employment purposes. That is because the cost of maintenance for the severely disabled is so high -- even the most modest success in finding work has an extraordinary payoff.

That is demonstrated dramatically by the Marc Gold program with Motorola in Austin, Texas, described in Chapter V. There, a group of 10 mentally retarded individuals -- some of them institutionalized -- moved from a position of drawing down $68,743 in public assistance the year before training to one of paying $6,111 in federal taxes alone in the year after training. That is a turnaround of $74,854 in taxes in one year -- almost half the $150,000 cost of the program. An employment program that returns full costs in two years, leaving its clients with a lifetime ahead of them of tax-paying rather than tax-consuming, has to be a stunning success. And no comparison group is really needed to determine whether this group's gains are program-related. Without intervention, institutionalized or otherwise dependent severely disabled individuals would be today approximately where they were before the program began.

Yet despite the clear good sense involved in rehabilitating where possible rather than maintaining at all costs, national policy is more attuned to the latter position than the former. That is the second thing that is apparent to anyone looking at the situation of handicapped individuals in our society. The disincentives to work are severe. Instead of encouraging work by easing the transition from disability support to competitive employment, the law tends to penalize the handicapped for working -- in some cases by placing individuals in real danger of crushing hospital expenses due to loss of Medicare.

"The primary disincentive for SSDI (Title II) and SSI (Title XVI) beneficiaries who want to work," noted the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation in a publication treating the problem, "is the fact that they cannot afford to work."67/

The pamphlet illustrated this situation with a typical case study. An oil-field worker in Texas injured on the job received $600 a month in

SSDI benefits for himself and three dependents. Surgery left him with a back impairment that precluded return to his old work. The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation sponsored him in training to obtain a high school equivalency diploma and a job as a credit clerk; where he could ease his back pain by alternately sitting and standing on the job. "The Counselor and Client learned that such a job usually pays about $700 per month, minus deductions for Federal Income Tax and FICA ($80), health insurance ($30), and retirement ($40). Net income, then, is expected to be $550 a month."

But why would anyone give up $600 a month in benefits to earn $550 a month on the job? That is what would happen to this worker at the end of his trial period, when his SSDI payments stopped. He would also at that time (1979) have lost his medical protection at the same time he lost his SSDI.

The situation for a catastrophically disabled beneficiary is, if anything, worse. The same set of SSDI figures and salary would apply to the individual in the case study above if he had become a quadriplegic as a result of his accident, but he would have additional medical and attendant drug payments that would put him even further in the hole. It would literally <u>cost</u> him approximately $200 a month to work. (This case is not at all unusual. In the course of this study, the author encountered several individuals who would have had to pay for the privilege of working, and two who actually did.)

In its 1979 pamphlet, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation suggested several changes in the law. Among them was a proposal to reduce benefits gradually as the client increased his or her earning capacity -- a reduction, say, of $1 in benefits for every $2 in increased pay. A second proposal would have made Medicare, including supply and drug coverage, available permanently to the severely disabled.

The 1980 Disability Amendments offered advances, but unfortunately many were stricken in the legislative process. What finally emerged as law did offer such improvements as an extension of the "trial work" period (the time when a disabled individual can work without losing benefits) and a continuance of medical protection for up to three years after the cessation of cash benefits to a disabled worker. Taken as a whole, however, the 1980 amendments did little to make the alternative of work a truly live one for SSDI and SSI recipients.

Indeed, since the amendments, life has become even more difficult for many handicapped individuals. Some 860,000 disabled persons have had their cases reviewed by the Social Security Administration since March of 1981, and about 340,000 -- a high percentage of them mentally impaired -- have had their disability benefits terminated. Yet of all those physically and mentally impaired individuals who appealed to an administrative law judge, about two-thirds have had their benefits restored. A General Accounting Office study found a reversal rate of 91 percent for mentally impaired individuals who had their terminations reviewed by an administrative law judge between June 1981 and August 1982.68/

Legislation to "amend the amendments" is being considered in Congress. Among the changes being suggested is one that would make permanent the extension of medical coverage for the severely disabled. Another would provide that the trial work period after which benefits are lost by a disabled person who has substantial gainful activity would have to have taken place immediately and consecutively before the review; as the law is being interpreted now, the trial work period can be accumulated over many months and a number of years.

Another feature of the law applied to disabled individuals under review by advocates is the Independent Living concept through which severely disabled individuals are assisted in developing a basis for deinstitutionalization and work. John Dalrymple, a specialist for special projects for the severely disabled in the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, points to the severely physically disabled individual who is mentally alert but is forced to live in an institution because there is insufficient community support for him to live and work independently. "Alert, healthy, disabled adults," Dalrymple says, "are being put in a box with the elderly and acutely ill." Demonstrations of Independent Living Centers around the country have helped focus community attention on the problem, but they barely scratch the surface. The kind of financial investment needed to do the job was contemplated in the legislation authorizing the ILCs in 1978, but funds were never appropriated.

Dalrymple, among others, believes that no such investment will be made until national attention is focused on the problem. "We need first a National Commission appointed by the President to study disincentives as a matter of highest national priority," he says. "The facts are so harsh that only this kind of exposure would make an impression. Twenty-five percent of the people in nursing homes are there for non-medical reasons."

Lex Frieden, himself a quadriplegic and director of the Independent Living Resource Utilization Project at Baylor University in Texas, agrees that the problem is severe. "Research demonstrates that most severely disabled people are not good candidates for work until they get shelter and a style of living that will accommodate work. If we wanted to in this country we could transfer a lot of payments from nursing and convalescent homes to people who would just love to become taxpayers."

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After more than two years of work on this study, the author thinks that a National Commission is a good idea. Its charge should probably be sufficiently broad to permit a full examination of the economics of preparing mentally and physically handicapped adults and youth for work. At a time when financial resources are limited, the Commission could examine the question: Shall we continue to pay the price of a national policy that discourages handicapped individuals from working?

Such a Commission would look at training models for handicapped individuals -- they are numerous, and space has permitted mention of only a few in this report -- from the perspective of cost-effectiveness. It would look at sheltered workshops, the Independent Living movement, and of course at the complex of disincentives that remain in place to discourage employment of handicapped individuals.

It would look, too, to the preservation and extension of one of the least expensive but most important services in place for handicapped youth -- the system of support groups for their parents. As the stories of the handicapped youth in this report illustrate, the quality of information available to their parents and the strength of the peer support they receive can make major differences in the preparation for life received by the children. Organizations like Child Find and the Association of Children With Learning Disabilities, to mention just two which played important roles in the stories related in this report, may be the best dollar-for-dollar investment the nation could make for handicapped youth.

But in the meantime some steps can be taken at the national, state, and local level with assurance that they would be of immediate value in improving the utilization of funds presently being spent, or to be spent, on training for the handicapped.

- The new Job Training Partnership Act should be amended at once to admit handicapped youth into programs on the same basis as handicapped adults -- without regard to economic criteria.

There appear to be no good arguments for the compromise struck by the Act, with adults -- but not youths -- admitted to programs strictly on the basis of handicap. As we observed in Chapter IV, involvement of handicapped youth in CETA training programs has lagged and continued to lag behind that of adults. For all of its efforts, Vocational Rehabilitation reaches only approximately one in ten youths in need of service. Finally, for reasons discussed earlier in this chapter, CETA programs have tended to involve handicapped minority youth at a rate considerably below that for non-handicapped minority youth -- a discriminatory tendency that is likely to be strengthened by the language of the Job Training Partnership Act.

- As it goes into effect, JTPA should be monitored closely to observe the effect on the enrollment of handicapped youth of limitations in work experience programs, the 70/30 percent training/administration and support split, and the application of first-generation performance standards.
- The 10 percent set-aside of funds for handicapped students mandated by the Vocational Education Act should be continued, or increased, in the reauthorization of the VEA currently under consideration. (VEA expires September 30, 1984.)

Since the states were required to match the VEA set-asides in 1976, participation by handicapped youth in vocational education programs has doubled, surely to a large extent because of the set-asides and the match requirement. The bad news is that the percentage of involvement of handicapped youth -- most recently set at 3.3 percent -- is still scarcely more than one-third of the expected prevalence of 9.5 percent. With handicapped youth continuing to receive predominantly "academic" preparation in public schools (see Chapter III), this is no time to abandon the set-asides with their track record of at least modest success.

Much of the hope for JTPA has been vested in the states. The Act turns over to the states and local Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) with their Private Industry Councils (PICs) major responsibility for operating the employment program. Leadership from the Governors' offices, the state legislatures, and the State Job Training Coordinating Councils is crucial.

- Governors should see to it that a representative of Vocational Rehabilitation or some other advocacy group for handicapped individuals sits on the SJTCC to help focus the attention of state planning on that specific problem area. To assure that information on state and local initiatives involving training of handicapped youths and adults is shared broadly across the system, some form of interstate networking should be considered.
- Local PICs with the authority to designate service deliverers should include similarly well-informed membership from the community of advocacy for the handicapped.

Programs for helping handicapped individuals into employment are crucial, but such programs are usually available or can be assembled from the resources available in most communities. Just as important as the programs -- and a prior requisite for such programming -- is the business of assessment. As we noted in Chapter IV, CETA prime sponsors attempting to serve handicapped youth have failed as often as not because they did not have on their staff the skills for assessment and did not know to purchase those skills from others in the community. As a result, there was a general lack of confidence about whether the individuals enrolled were handicapped or not. That confusion has even led some to conclude that individuals with handicaps should not be enrolled in employment programs for the general population. That, of course, is just another (more modern) way of putting this particular problem off in the closet.

- Job Training Partnership Act programs for handicapped youth should capitalize on the expertise available in virtually every community. All potential clients should be assessed by professionals who are sufficiently skilled to identify handicaps, to assist in the mainstreaming of handicapped individuals where feasible, and to assist in referral to specific programs for handicapped individuals where that alternative seems more productive. Planning for local JTPA programs should begin with this assessment and referral process and go on to encourage agencies that work with handicapped individuals to come up with programs for funding.

Finally, much of the responsibility for the atmosphere in which future actions will be played out falls to the advocacy groups and ultimately to handicapped individuals and the parents of handicapped youths. Shrill demands for "justice" and "rights" tend to provoke hostile responses or, perhaps worse, apathy. There are many "rights" in our pluralistic society, as the Roger Starr article in Harper's points out, and they compete for affirmation in a time when funds for such purposes appear at least to be finite, if not hurtfully limited.

Far better for advocates to stress the palpable waste of public funding involved in the present "maintenance society" approach, where money is dumped virtually without limit into maintaining nonproductivity, but doled out stingily on the very processes of training that can improve productivity and actually return visible public "profit."

And far better for advocates to help lay to rest the myth that a decent response to the needs of handicapped individuals in this country necessarily involves a huge investment of public resources -- that whole transportation systems need to be reconstructed, for instance, or buildings torn down and rebuilt at public expense, or that workplace adaptations involve great expense in the private sector. A system of vans for public use can do wonders for the mobility of the physically handicapped and can be made to pay for itself at least partially, leaving the public the winner for the increased productivity. Studies cited in this report (Chapter IV) indicate that workplace innovations for those with occupational disability more often than not can be effected without great additional expense.

There is never enough money to satisfy the needs of any special population group, and handicapped youth and adults are no exception. But the main problem is misperceived as one of insufficient funding. The main problem is one of insufficient will. As a society, we could learn about will from the stories of the young people and their parents that constitute the main thread of this report. They -- and millions like them -- face problems requiring great expense of will every day. How well they do making it from day to day depends upon how much will and stamina they have. The vast majority of them do not need and would not take a handout; they could use, and would welcome, a hand up.

VII. Seven Special Kids: April, 1983

Billy, Charlotte, deaf -- "There is something to that old saw that you can see a person by looking in his eyes. I see something there, more than Billy shows in his conversations." Gary Beene, director, Council for the Hearing Impaired.

At 18, conversation still is limited for Billy. He continues to take signing and signs well now, but, as his foster father says, "it takes two to sign." Integrated fully into his foster home (his stepparents are now his legal guardians, and he is no longer interested in seeing his natural mother), and attending public high school in Charlotte, he has moved out of the world of the deaf -- the training school for the deaf he was enrolled in six years ago -- into the world of the hearing. It's a tough adjustment. Poor reading skills -- Billy did not begin school until he was nine years old -- have held him back in school and hampered him in a year-long struggle to get a driver's license. "The rule is that you must read the exam yourself without any help," his foster father observed last August. "It is unfair. Billy can drive and he knows what the signs mean. Non-English-speaking people can drive on their foreign licenses, but Billy can't drive." Progress is slow, but it is progress, and Billy now has a learner's permit. He is also taking two vocational education courses in furniture-making, a traditional industry in North Carolina. "His two favorite classes," his foster father says. And he is beginning to think in ways his foster parents thought he never would when he was in the training school for the deaf. "He's thinking down the road, three, four years. Community college and a job. He has a much better grasp of what's involved in living in a hearing world." Billy's foster father has a major concern raised by the Supreme

Court's Rowley case (see Chapter VI). "The recent Supreme Court ruling regarding the degree to which a school system must support handicapped children worries us. In vocational training especially, much extra effort and money must be spent in order to give deaf children an 'equal' education."

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Brent, Charlotte, learning-disabled -- "When he was little, he wanted to be a brain surgeon, then later on he wanted to be an orthodontist, now he wants to be a truck driver." Brent's mother.

If he should see the phrase "learning-disabled" after his name, Brent would be angry. He is angry much of the time now anyway. He is 17 and still busily rejecting authority, especially parental. He is in school, barely hanging on, bored and generally unhappy. He will have to go to court because he was arrested for breaking a windshield, a crime he says he didn't commit. He has had three different jobs in the past year. The first was at a fast-food place where he worked only a month before being fired. Then he got a job in an automotive repair shop. "Man," he said once, "I love cars better than most anything." He loved the job, too, had it all summer and for a month into the school year, but got caught joy-riding in one of the shop's cars one night and that was the end of that. Now he's working in a warehouse. He was afraid he wouldn't get the job because of his arrest for breaking the windshield. The boss made him take a lie detector test and he told about it. "He's honest," his mother says. "But he still cares more about his friends and his social life than he does about a job." He still does fairly well in the special education classes he attends at high school, but his teachers describe him as "unmotivated." What's the future?

Brent shrugs. He could go to the community college in Charlotte, but he refuses to go if he is going to be labeled "learning-disabled." His mother tells him -- forget the label; just try to find something you can do at your own speed. "I don't know," she says, "maybe it would have been different if he had come along a little later, when this LD thing was a little better understood."

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Darlene, Seattle, spina bifida, hydrocephalic -- "Let's face it. Everything at the school is geared for the faster, smarter kids, and I'm not one of them." Darlene.

Darlene would be 20. She graduated from high school with the help of her special education teacher, Kathy Haring, who gave her credit for the last career development course despite the fact that she had not been in a work experience placement during the last eight weeks of the semester. Darlene spent the summer after graduation relaxing at home and traveling with her parents and then began looking for work. Darlene's mother felt that her "miracle baby" daughter needed more training and better skills for the receptionist-secretary jobs she wanted to do. A trained and once top-level executive secretary herself, Darlene's mother hoped she would enroll in a one-year secretarial training program so that she could better compete against the kind of work force available to employers today. But Darlene was resisting the idea of more education. Her mother hoped she would come around. In the fall following her graduation from high school, Darlene's father was transferred and the family moved to California. Efforts to locate them and to learn about Darlene's present situation have failed.

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Harold, Seattle, emotionally disturbed -- "Harold was particularly hard to work with because he was so distrustful and withdrawn... At first he wouldn't talk to me at all." Dave McNelly, Harold's special education teacher.

At times, McNelly was able to break through to Harold, but that young man's early history is one of mistrust, an emotion that is clearly part of his condition. When Harold left his public school program job in Seattle, he was going through a breakdown. After a time, his mother committed him to an institution when he refused to go voluntarily. His schizophrenia at that time was considered severe. At that point, in the summer of 1981, the lines of contact between Harold and his family and the school and support system in Seattle began to fade rapidly. McNelly learned that Harold was discharged after a change in medication improved his condition. He was referred by a private physician to a Seattle agency that provides "mental health counseling, prevocational training, medication evaluation and adjustment, work evaluation, and work adjustment training" for moderately to severely psychiatrically disabled people aged 18 and over. In the fall of 1981, Harold's mother told McNelly that Harold had an intake interview scheduled. At that point, McNelly lost contact with the family altogether. A check with the agency late in 1982 indicated that Harold had never been admitted. Reasons for non-admission could include: an assessment that the individual was currently too disturbed to make work assessment or training feasible; current lack of openings; inability to put together the public or private funds needed to pay tuition; or a decision by the client or family not to participate. Public funding for outpatient services to the psychiatrically disabled had been cut back severely in the State of

Washington. At that time, the agency in question was operating at about half the funding level of previous years.

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Maria, San Antonio, mentally retarded -- "Maria is a very sweet girl. When I think of Maria, I smile." Rosie Arias, vocational adjustment counselor.

In April 1983, at age 22, Maria celebrated her first full year of work on the same job. Still shy, painfully conscious of a slight slowness in speaking, she ventured one of her few comments beyond "yes" or "no" over the telephone. "I am happy now. I think I am beginning to win." (No efforts could coax from her a further explanation of the word "win," but she repeated it and asserted that it was the word she meant.) Her job is in a school cafeteria where she does some food preparation (salads and biscuits) and cleaning up. She is employed at the minimum wage from 6:45 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon, five days a week. The school is only 10 blocks from where she lives, and Maria is able to get back and forth by bus and to use the bus to go shopping and to the movies. She practices her writing with long letters to her sister-in-law in Puerto Rico. She has a beginner's driving license. She doesn't go out socially very much, her mother says, but she has become far more independent than her mother ever imagined would be possible. Her mother and others who know Maria give a major credit to her vocational adjustment counselor, Rosie Arias, and to the Bexar County Labor Community Agency, the CETA-funded program that she entered after graduating from high school. "The program gave her confidence she couldn't have gotten anywhere else," says Ms. Arias. And what of Maria's dream of working in a printshop? "She really does not spell well enough for that," her mother says. Others disagree. But employers in that business would not take a chance on her. Now she has a job. "I tell my sister," says her mother, "that one of these days I will not be seeing much of her any more."

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Mickey, Flint, cerebral palsy -- "When we realized that we had a handicapped son, we decided to spend a lot of time together." Mickey's father.

Mickey is a rare one. It's probably safe to agree with observers who say that he would have made it without the vocational training program at Genesee Skills Center or the intervention of Vocational Rehabilitation to get him that first job -- much as those services helped. Mickey grew up thinking he would have to work twice as hard as the next person and overcome setbacks that might discourage others. He is the boy who kept getting up to try to learn to walk again after his broken ankle healed. Having learned to walk twice in his life, he has assumed that there is very little he can't do. "He is determined," says his father. It's clear that his parents brought him up in that determination, helping him as much as he would let them, and then let him go, to make it on his own or to miss out and get ready to try again. Recently, Mickey was chosen employee of the month at the hospital where he works as a housekeeper in Flint. It's the second honor to come his way -- he was Goodwill graduate of the year in 1979. For Mickey, pain is a constant companion. "Some days I go faster and some days I go slower," he said recently, in his halting speech. "Sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's hard. I know I have a lot to do on this job, but I don't let my bad days hold me down. Although my legs hurt, I have to keep moving." Mickey is cautious about the future. "One day at a time," he says. His father approves. "We'll have to see how far he can go by himself and how much help he'll need."

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Polly, Flint, blind -- "It turned out to be a malignant tumor about the size of a small tangerine. It was a question of maybe I'd die and maybe I'd be blind and maybe I'd come out all right." Polly.

Polly has been working steadily since leaving her training program at the service center for the visually impaired in Flint. She has been working steadily but she has been working subsidized jobs and that worries her. "If I could just get something permanent, get rid of all this temporary stuff... it's not so hot." After deciding that the medical transcription course at the center was just too hard for her, Polly had a CETA job at a senior citizens' home, doing office work, clerical-typing-filing. from December 1981 until May 1982. "It was basically the kind of work I'm into and I liked it fine." When funding for that job ran out, she got back in touch with her counselor at the center in Flint. "She kept her morale up," the counselor said. "She hasn't given up on herself or the system. Sometimes it beats them down and they lose faith, but she hasn't yet." Polly's next job was with the Commission for the Blind, again a government-subsidized job, and again doing clerical work. She has been talking again with her counselor, trying to decide what to do if and when the job runs out. "Maybe I should go back to the center and take word processing." She is living with a girl friend in a two-family flat on the east side of Detroit. "It's good. She drives me to work and we get along fine. But I worry some about the future, getting a job that isn't going to disappear on me."

Footnotes

1. *Newsweek*, May 9, 1977.

2. *The Denver Post*, April 6, 1977.

3. *The Washington Post*, April 6, 1977.

4. *Ibid*.

5. *Newsweek*, May 9, 1977.

6. Memorandum to American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities Affiliates, April 28, 1977.

7. Eileen Simpson, *Reversals: A Personal Account of Victory Over Dyslexia* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 240.

8. Roa Lynn, *Learning Disabilities: An Overview of Theories, Approaches, and Politics* (New York, Free Press, 1979).

9. John Gliedman and William Roth, *The Unexpected Minority: Handicapped Children in America* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980).

10. Harrison H. Donnely, "U. S. Falls Behind on Promise to Help Educate the Handicapped," *Congressional Quarterly*, March 24, 1979.

11. Frank Bowe, *Handicapping America: Barriers to Disabled People* (New York, Harper & Row, 1978).

12. *To Assure the Free Appropriate Education of All Handicapped Children: Second Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of Public Law 94-142*, U. S. Department of Education (Washington, 1980).

13. *Ibid*.

14. *Service Delivery Assessment: Education for the Handicapped*, Office of the Inspector General, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (Washington, 1979).

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16. J. A. Pyecha, *National Survey of Individualized Education Programs for Handicapped Children* (Research Triangle Park [N. C.], Research Triangle Institute, 1979).

17. *To Assure the Free Appropriate Education....*

18. Gliedman and Roth.

19. *An Act to Abolish the Advocacy Council for the Mentally Ill and Developmentally Disabled and the Governor's Council on Employment of the Handicapped and to Transfer Their Functions to a New Council to be Known as The Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities*, House Bill 1030, General Assembly of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1979).

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21. Donnely.

22. *To Assure the Free Appropriate Education....*

23. *Vocational Education of Handicapped Youth: State of the Art*, National Association of State Boards of Education (Washington, 1979).

24. *To Assure the Free Appropriate Education....*

25. "Mildly retarded individuals may learn basic academic skills up to approximately the sixth grade level; moderately retarded persons to the second grade level; severely impaired individuals may learn minimal self-help skills; and profoundly retarded persons may require life-long institutional care." Bowe, *Handicapping America*, p. 61.

26. Paul Hippolitus, unpublished paper prepared for the President's Commission on Employment of the Handicapped (Washington, June 25, 1981). The author commented further: "An abnormally high number of students counted themselves into the handicapped population on the basis of wearing eyeglasses. Nearly 32 percent of the 2.6 percent said they had a visual impairment. If we correct for this skewing, the actual figure is below 2 percent."

27. Frank Bowe, *Rehabilitating America: Toward Marking Disabled People Independent* (New York, Harper & Row, 1980).

28. Figures furnished by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, U. S. Department of Education.

29. Handicapped enrollment in long-term vocational education programs was 2.22 percent; and for other occupational preparation programs, 2.65 percent. The percentage of handicapped students in apprecticeship training programs in comparable high schools was even lower -- 1.02 percent.

30. William D. Halloran and Jane Ann Razeghi, "Lingering Barriers to Full Vocational Education Opportunities for Handicapped Individuals," *Council for Exceptional Children*, special edition, Summer 1981.

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