

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED, Inc.



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Affiliates: AFPH Educational Fund, Inc., AFPH Institute for Human Engineering, Inc.
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PAUL A. STRACHAN, President

MISS MILDRED SCOTT, Secretary-Treasurer

June 18, 1954

To Secretaries
AFL State Federations of Labor
CIO State Industrial Union Councils
AFL City Central Bodies, and
CIO City Industrial Union Councils

Dear Sirs and Brothers:

We respectfully request that your members be apprized of the enclosed letter to all Governors of States and Territories, and that your affiliates make all efforts possible, to effectuate the suggestions made therein, as consistent with Labor's own program to advance the interests of the Handicapped, nationally.

Your attention and support will be appreciated.

Fraternally,

PAUL A. STRACHAN

President

Encl.

STATEMENT OF PAUL A. STRACHAN, PRESIDENT
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
1370 National Press Building
Washington 4, D. C.

June 24, 1954

SUBJECT: BILLS FOR HANDICAPPED

The time has come when I must report upon Legislation pending for early action in Senate and House even though, at the moment, a definite conclusion can not be arrived at. But I am appending hereto, breakdown of S. 2759, and H.R. 9640, the Administration bills, which we urge that you read, and compare with the overall value, and need for enactment of our FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED bills. These bills were reported to Senate and House, June 22, 1954.

As is known, our FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED bills have been a gradual development, covering the 14 years of AFPH activity, plus some 26 years of my own experience, prior to that. They present a complete, overall program -- coordinating the 35 Federal agencies which have a part of the Handicapped program -- (which NO OTHER BILLS DO) -- would appropriate approximately \$250,000,000 against the present \$23,500,000 annual expenditure for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and, in general, treat this great problem affecting some 38,000,000 Handicapped with the vigor and vision that it needs and should have.

SENATE

At the outset of this Session, we began an unceasing campaign in both Senate and House. Much to our surprise, despite the fact that the Federal Agency for Handicapped bills had been pending for more than a year, that fact was completely ignored by Administration leaders, and in early March, Sen. H. Alexander Smith, (Rep., N. J.) Chairman, Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, introduced the Administration bill, S. 2759.

We were further surprised when it was announced that hearings would be held, ONLY, on S. 2759 and no other measures, despite the fact that our own bill, as stated, had been filed a year before and was pending before Smith's Committee long before ANY OTHER bill was even introduced.

We waged a hot fight; finally forcing open hearings, and we were only allowed 30 minutes for testimony before Senate Subcommittee on Health, Welfare, etc., (of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare), of which Senator William A. Purtell (Rep., Conn.) is Chairman, and Senators Irving M. Ives (Rep., N.Y.), Robert W. Upton (Rep. N.H.) Lister Hill (Dem., Ala.) and Herbert H. Lehman (Dem. N.Y.) are members.

It is impossible to cover, orally, a bill of the magnitude of the Federal Agency for Handicapped, in only 30 minutes, so we filed an additional statement. Notwithstanding, the Committee persisted in treating the hearings as being ONLY for S. 2759, and ignored S. 2570 (our bill). I may say Senators Hill and Lehman made a fight for our bill in Subcommittee.

On June 10, the Subcommittee reported to the Whole Committee, on a slightly amended S. 2759, which bill is a travesty, and wholly inadequate, and completely ignores the need for coordination of Federal agencies' activities, which is vital to the success of the program.

The Committee voted, on strictly Party lines, against Sen. James E. Murray's motion to substitute our bill, S. 2570, for the Administration bill, S. 2759, and the amended bill was reported to the Senate June 22. (See attached statement.)

OUR ONLY HOPE, therefore, is in getting our friends in the Senate to attempt, when the bill reaches the floor, to substitute S. 2570 therefor; and, failing in that, to amend whatever bill is the vehicle, by inserting sections of S. 2570, seriatim. THIS IS IMPORTANT, NOW.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hearings on the FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED were held, as will be remembered, in July, 1953; JUST BEFORE CONGRESS ADJOURNED. I felt, at the time, it was a mistake that such a long interval would elapse between hearings, and, action on the bill, and I so stated, in my testimony at that time.

In the late May, 1954, Chairman Samuel K. McConnell, Jr. (Rep., Pa.) of the House Committee on Education and Labor, began holding what was termed "Executive Sessions", with objective of bringing out a bill under Mr. McConnell's name.

Several "Executive Sessions" were held. Mr. McConnell told me that I would not be permitted to sit in these Sessions, because I am deaf. This, despite the fact that I have conducted, with the aid of secretaries, hundreds of meetings, conferences, etc. He suggested that I name two persons to represent AFPH. I refused to permit anyone to represent AFPH, on the ground that I, by Convention and Constitutional mandate, am responsible for AFPH legislation, and I wrote Mr. McConnell asking that our Secretary-Treasurer, Miss Mildred Scott, if I was not allowed, to sit for me. I received no reply at all.

I did suggest to Mr. McConnell that his Committee might call on some individuals who had some knowledge of this field, either administratively, or otherwise, and were, therefore, in position to advise the Committee. These were, Col. George E. Ijams, present National Rehabilitation Director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Dr. Merle E. Frampton, New York Institute for the Education of the Blind, and Vice-Admiral Mahlon S. Tisdale, who has a deep interest and considerable experience in dealing with problems of those who are Cerebral Palsied, and, Amputees.

Col. Ijams sat with the Committee on one occasion, and was obliged to leave town, on an official tour. Dr. Frampton sat with the Committee on one occasion, coming down from New York City especially for that purpose. Admiral Tisdale sat in, on several occasions, and kept account of the Committee's deliberations.

None of the suggestions of any of the above were, so far as is presently shown, adopted by the Committee.

Mr. McConnell refused my urgent appeal that Labor, as representative of some 65,000,000 working people, who are the chief individuals at interest in this matter, be represented in these Sessions.

Finally, a draft of a bill was made, and Miss Scott and myself visited Mr. McConnell's office, as I had asked, when such draft was completed, in view of my having been debarred from hearings, that I be permitted to review the draft, and give Mr. McConnell such suggestions as were pertinent.

We found, in Mr. McConnell's office, Mr. Derrickson, an employee of the House Committee, and the Messrs. Conley and Skinner, Counsels for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, WHO HAD DRAFTED THE BILL, rather than the bill having been drafted, impartially, by the House Committee staff, itself, as is the case most of the time.

My visit to Mr. McConnell's office was made only four hours after the draft had been printed, and I had time to only hurriedly skim it. I protested many sections of the McConnell draft, but all these were thrown out, and I suggested to Miss Scott, at the outset of the meeting when I found that Mr. McConnell had called in these other people, that we make our apologies and leave, since it was plain that we would get nowhere insofar as the AFPH program was concerned. But, Miss Scott felt that we should stick it out and see what was in Mr. McConnell's mind.

At time of writing this, the Committee has been considering the McConnell draft, and, so far, Rep. Graham A. Barden (Dem., N.C.) has led the attack on the McConnell version, and has succeeded in practically wrecking it. The only virtue of the McConnell bill was, the proposal that more money be added to the program, although we objected to the manner in which the money would be spent, since all the bill did was to dump \$35,000,000 the first year; \$45,000,000 the second year; and \$65,000,000 annually, thereafter into the lap of the Secretary of HEW, and virtually give her control of its spending, WITHOUT ANY COORDINATION OF THE PROGRAM AS A WHOLE, AND, WITHOUT ANY DEFINITE OUTLINE OF A PROGRAM, SPECIFICALLY STATING WHAT THE MONEY COULD AND WOULD BE USED FOR. We are trying to protect the interests of the taxpayers, as well as the Handicapped, and we want appropriations increased, BUT, SPELLED OUT, SO EVERYBODY CONCERNED WILL KNOW JUST WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH MONEY SO APPROPRIATED.

The deliberations of the McConnell Committee seem to have almost wrecked the original draft of the McConnell bill, and, as far as AFPH is concerned, we cannot support the shadow, when we demand and need, the substance. We are attaching breakdown of HR 9640 as reported to House on June 22.

I want to emphasize a MOST IMPORTANT THING: In neither the Senate bill, S. 2759, nor the House bill H.R. 9640, is there any compensatory offset for promotion of EMPLOYMENT OF HANDICAPPED, by additional appropriations for the U. S. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE. This is a great mistake. If these Senate and House bills grant OVR more money, which, presumably, would mean MORE Handicapped treated, trained, and guided, THEN, THERE MUST BE AT LEAST TEN MILLION DOLLARS MORE APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, specifically FOR HANDICAPPED PLACEMENT. All who have any real knowledge of this field, know that the so-called rehabilitation program never amounted to a damn!, until a REAL EFFORT WAS MADE TO SECURE JOBS FOR HANDICAPPED - which, on its 34-year record, OVR NEVER DID!

CONFERENCES WITH ADMINISTRATION LEADERS

Following the introduction by Smith, of the Administration bill, S. 2759, and seeing its utter inadequacy, we respectfully asked conferences with the following:

1. We wrote Vice-President Richard M. Nixon, asking that he confer on this matter, as Administration Senate Leader, with an AFPH-Labor Associates Committee, and urging his attention. WE RECEIVED NO REPLY.

2. We asked Secretary of Labor James Paul Mitchell for a conference, for same purpose. He assigned Assistant Secretary of Labor, Rocco C. Siciliano to meet with us, and the Committee consisted of George R. Nelson, Machinists; William D. Johnson, Order Railway Conductors; Francis P. Gorman, United Textile Workers; George P. Crago, Gas, Coke, & Chemical Workers; Charles Engelbrecht, AFL Insurance Agents; James Mark, United Mine Workers of America, and Ted C. Harris, Bridge & Iron Workers.

The Committee urged that Secretary Mitchell testify for S. 2570, our bill, and we made a strong case as to why the Department of Labor should support it.

We had no reply from the Secretary, and when I called on Siciliano, we were told frankly, the Secretary wasn't interested; that he would go along with the Administration program, and NOT get into any jurisdictional disputes with the Secretary of H.E.W. Like Pontius Pilate, the Department washed its hands of a workable plan to expand the Handicapped program.

3. We asked, and received appointment with my old friend, Speaker of the House Joseph W. Martin, Jr. The Committee consisted of Walter J. Mason, Leg. Rep., AFL; James Mark, Jr., Leg. Rep., United Mine Workers; Ben Blankenship, Leg. Rep., Communications Workers, George Nelson, Leg. Rep., Machinists.

We presented our case to the Speaker, who stated that he would support whatever bill came out of the House Committee on Education and Labor. He was reminded that I was responsible, primarily, for establishment of this program, some 30-odd years ago, and he remembered it, and stated, insofar as possible, he would personally support expansion of the Handicapped setup.

5. We asked for conference with Senator John Sherman Cooper (Rep., Ky.) who is one of the Co-Sponsors of S. 2570. George R. Nelson, as Chairman of the AFPH-Labor Associates Committee, attended, together with Miss Scott, and myself. We spent considerable time going over S. 2570, and urging that the Senator give it full support. He promised to favor the principles of the bill, but, later developments indicate that he gave the bill no support in Committee.
6. We asked for conference with Nelson P. Rockefeller, Undersecretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. We were invited to his office and, as per appointment, Miss Scott and myself were there promptly on time.

Having had several unhappy experiences with previous heads of the present Department of HEW, I had misgivings about this appointment, because, at all times in the past, when invitation was given by them, to us, for some reason, they did not keep the appointments, leaving us high and dry.

So it proved with Mr. Rockefeller, who, later wrote that he had been detained in a meeting, and suggested, if we wanted to see him on this subject, to arrange a later appointment. I told him that THAT WAS UP TO HIM. That we did not break the appointment. Up to time of this letter, we have heard nothing further from Mr. Rockefeller.

7. We asked for conference with Senator Richard B. Russel (Dem., Ga.) whom I have known for many years. We asked him to back our fight for FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED bills, in Senate, and he agreed to do so.

Miss Scott and myself were accompanied on this occasion by James Mark, Jr., Leg. Rep., United Mine Workers.

NATIONAL REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION

This Association, composed primarily of States' Directors and employees of Rehabilitation agencies, and long opposed to all AFPH programs, was asked to confer with our Committee.

E. B. Whitten, Exec. Secy., NRA, attended, and our Committee was, Francis P. Gorman, United Textile Workers; Russell M. Stephens, American Federation of Technical Engineers, Miss Scott, and myself.

We frankly stated, we knew there would be difficulties in getting a bill through Congress, and asked what, if any, agreement might be reached on a compromise, between our Federation and its Associates, and NRA.

Whitten stated they were backing bills which simply kept the States from getting any LESS money than heretofore, but, they would NOT compromise nor accept any AFPH proposals.

This is exactly in line with the condition that has prevailed for the past 14 years. AFPH would propose; NRA would oppose. There is nothing to be gained by any further efforts to reconcile the viewpoints of AFPH and NRA. AFPH is FOR the Handicapped. NRA is FOR the States' Directors, and be damned to the Handicapped!

* * * * *

Innumerable conferences have been held with other Senators and Representatives, and AFPH Officers, and their Associates in Labor have made much effort, and expenditure of time and money, to see that legislation has been properly handled. Many day and night sessions have been held, and there have been regular monthly conferences in which all concerned have participated. One good that has come out of this has been that there is, today, a clearer and better understanding of the Handicapped problem, and remedies to meet it, than before.

S U M M A R Y

Voicing a personal opinion, only, I believe that this Administration and most of its Congressional Leaders having jurisdiction in this field (with exception of Speaker Martin) are indifferent to the Handicapped. They praise us in public; tell us "how wonderful we are", but, when it comes to laying money on the line, or adopting AFPH suggestions for a REAL program, they ignore us.

I believe the Handicapped of America should remember those who have fought for the Handicapped in ANY degree, and, up to now, we are indebted to Senators Murray, Hill, Neely, Lehman, and Douglas, and to Rep. Roy D. Wier (Dem., Minn.) and other of our Sponsors, including Reps. Kelley (Pa.); Hagen (Minn.); Tollefson (Wash.); Van Zandt (Pa.); Rhodes (Pa.); Withrow (Wis.); McCormack (Mass.);

Chudoff, (Pa.); Perkins (Ky.); Celler (N. Y.) and Doyle (Calif).

We should also remember the promises made to us, and not redeemed, and the outright antagonism and utter indifference to us, and in this category we must place, Sen. H. Alexander Smith, of New Jersey; William A. Purtell, of Connecticut; Irving M. Ives, of New York, and John D. Upton, of New Hampshire.

We have long experienced the bitter opposition of Rep. Graham A. Barden (Dem. N.C.) who refuses to see the need for ANY Betterment of the existing program, which, at best, ONLY rehabilitates 60,000 of the approximate 350,000 who are injured or diseased, each year, and does nothing at all for the tremendous backlog of from 7,000,000 to 9,000,000, who are from 60% to 100% disabled. This is sheer folly, and is only proof of ignorance and indifference to the needs and problems of our 38,000,000 Handicapped.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I urge that all interested members and friends of the Handicapped, upon receipt of this statement wire, phone, write, or see their Senators and Representatives, URGING SUBSTITUTION OF THE FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED bills for the miserable abortions now proposed by House and Senate Committees for Handicapped program.

If such effort to substitute fails, then, URGE YOUR CONGRESSMEN TO AMEND WHATEVER BILLS COME ONTO THE FLOOR OF SENATE AND HOUSE, SO THAT THE MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED BILLS WILL BE INCLUDED THEREIN.

Let your wires, phone calls, and personal contacts be sharp and to the point. Millions of American citizens are suffering, for lack of attention that could and might be gained, if the FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED bills are enacted, and anything less than an over-all program is unbusiness-like, and inhumanitarian.

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