

commentary

Page 4 . . . Shorthorn . . . Friday, July 12, 1974

Future of handicapped keyed to equal education

Recently the Texas constitutional convention included a provision in the proposed constitution guaranteeing equal rights for the handicapped.

While this extension of rights will provide equal job opportunity and pay, there is no provision guaranteeing that the quality education needed to qualify for good jobs will be accessible.

(See related story, Page 1)

Because present state university facilities generally lack architectural necessities for handicapped persons it is very difficult for many of them to continue their schooling past the junior college level, where the problem has been met more successfully.

UTA has the opportunity to change that trend.

Last week \$34,000 was offered to the administration by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) to continue removal of architectural barriers.

UTA is one of the few four-year colleges in the state making an attempt to provide the expensive changes and additions necessary to accommodate the handicapped and the TRC, by its offer, is acknowledging that fact.

However, there is a catch.

The monies offered by the TRC must be matched with university funds. And \$34,000 is no small request

for a school whose budget for next year will not even keep up with the present rate of inflation.

All indications though are that the administration will come through with the needed amount and this is commendable.

We hope, however, that this will just be the beginning.

While \$68,000 sounds like a large amount, it will, at the most, provide ramps, curb cuts and a bathroom accessible to wheelchairs for each sex in all buildings.

These are minimal changes.

The original plan of the Handicapped Students Association to make this a model campus called for additions running into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Education is an expensive proposition and additional costs benefitting only a small number of persons may seem hard to justify. But the present burden of support would be offset if later they are able to become fully contributing members of society.

Equality should mean not only job opportunity but equality of opportunity for education.

It's one thing to constitutionalize equality. It's another to see that it's available.

—MINDI LEDBETTER

