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Deafness Today

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I was wondering if the two Chinese fellows Tom Mayes was talking about were the same who were at the Peking Airport when the President got off the plane. One Communist Chinese turned to the other and said, "Well, there goes the neighborhood." I would say, however, that the President's trip perhaps is a symbol of, in some ways, what we are doing here at this conference in bridging communication gaps and making plans to bridge others in a major way in this next decade.

My determination to participate in this work came first, really, from Mary Switzer, who would have been proud to have been there tonight to see this award presented by her beloved colleagues to a good friend. As she was our mutual friend and my predecessor, I trust that the relationship she began to build with this organization, that you will let me build on that and expand those close ties.

I am glad Dr. Newman was here to speak to you this afternoon, as the head of vocational rehabilitation. As Bill Usdane mentioned, I am responsible for rehabilitation programs and also others for youth development, aged, Medicaid, and so forth. Like most agencies, the Social and Rehabilitation Service is not doing what it should, or what we could, for deaf people. We are really just learning, without in any way minimizing the effort that Boyce Williams and his colleagues have made over the past quarter of a century. We have just established for greater visibility his Office of Deafness and Communicative Disorders. Now I have to get Boyce more staff to live up to that. We are working closely with state administrators who are beginning to be more sensitive to the problems of deaf people. I was prepared to make tribute in this regard to Craig Mills, but you have certainly upstaged me in a wonderful way to recognize him, who appropriately is the head of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, and has helped to get them to move forward in this field. Commissioner Newman and I have had our first opportunity to meet with all the leaders of the deaf for the first time together, largely promoted by Fred Schreiber and

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others. We need to strengthen these relationships, and we need to strengthen them with this organization.

I hope my presence here will help you feel at ease about approaching HEW aggressively. It is difficult to know how to work with the Federal bureaucracy, I know. In working with HEW you may feel like one of our bureaucrats who died and of course went to meet the devil. The devil said, "You have a choice of where you want to spend eternity. We have three rooms. I will show you the first." And he took him to the first room and opened it, and there everybody in a room with a marble floor was standing on his head. It looked very uncomfortable and this bureaucrat said, "Show me the second room." They went to the second room. It was a big room with a carpet and everybody was standing on his head. He said, "At least that looks a little better but eternity is a long time. Show me the third room." He went into the third room and everybody was standing up but they were knee deep in mud. "Well," the devil said, "Make your choice. I haven't got much time." He said, "Well, they all look bad to me, but I'll take the third room and stay right here." The devil left, and when he closed the door somebody in the back yelled, "Okay, coffee break is over, everybody back on your head."

Now, I won't tell you which room we in the Social and Rehabilitation Service represent but let me tell you some things we are doing to move in this area as your partners, so you will have a little feel. I will summarize some things Boyce has already mentioned.

Our first support, of course, is through the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and the steady annual increase of deaf persons rehabilitated indicates we are beginning to succeed in developing skills and resources. Trained people is what we need, and the number of rehabilitants has risen from 2,800 in 1960 to 6,000 in 1970. Also, we now have about 17,000 deaf persons, in a service status in state vocational rehabilitation agencies on any given day of the year.

In order to move ahead we have to be imaginative in research and demonstration. In the past decade and a half, SRS has taken important strides toward developing and demonstrating training and service programs to meet the needs of deaf adults. One initiative like this in which our Edna Adler was a key was the pre-vocational and adjustment training center at Lansing, Michigan, to demonstrate preparing severely handicapped deaf men for rehabilitation and competitive employment. You might be familiar with all of these or some of them. A program was established for deaf-retarded persons at the Lapeer (Michigan) State Home and Training School, where it was shown that deaf-retarded patients can be vocationally habilitated through appropriate preparation. Another important program took place at the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center in Arkansas where a demonstration was conducted to determine the feasibility of providing services to deaf persons, including the severely handicapped, in a large, comprehensive rehabilitation facility.

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All of these kinds of projects, we hope, will result in greater opportunities for independent living for deaf persons. The conclusive evidence they provided, that severely handicapped deaf adults can be rehabilitated, has led to the Administration's legislative request for authorization of comprehensive rehabilitation centers to offer service to severely handicapped deaf youth and adults. We and you can rehabilitate more people if we can get the facilities and the trained manpower, and we need to work together to get them.

We support the research and training centers with which you may be familiar. The Deafness Research and Training Center at New York University was established six years ago – about the same time this organization was established – and is the only SRS-sponsored research and training facility devoted solely to the rehabilitation of deaf persons. In its six years of existence, its research activities have ventured into many areas of considerable potential value for deaf persons. It has devoted effort primarily in three areas: the effects of deafness on the social interaction process, multidisciplinary training to prepare deaf and hearing persons to work effectively with deaf people as psychologists, counselors, religious advisors, educators, and mental health personnel, in a way, symbolic again, of this organization and what it represents; they have worked on cooperative projects such as the evaluation of the National Theatre of the Deaf, the development of guidelines on adult education that encouraged establishment of the Continuing Education Center at Gallaudet, and the identification of long-range program needs for deaf persons which will be the platform for the HEW Conference at Gallaudet on Deafness in the Seventies, to be held late this year; they worked out of that Center, for publication, the first textbook on counseling of the deaf and the design of curriculum for interpreter training. A second Rehabilitation and Training Center, at the University of Arkansas, is also making important contributions to more effective rehabilitation services for deaf persons. We also support the National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults. Just over a year ago, I had, really, a personal privilege in presenting a federal grant of two and one-half million dollars to build and equip this Center, which is the Nation's first training and research center for deaf blind persons.

We are getting now into the publications field in cooperation with PRWAD. We are going to publish with you the *Deafness Annual*, and this publication which I expect to come out June first will provide comprehensive coverage of developments in the fields of rehabilitation, education, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, and other related disciplines.

SRS is also conscious of the need to enrich professional training in areas relating to deaf people, particularly in the training of interpreters. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf is an on-going SRS project which coordinates activities that enhance interpreting as a crucial service to deaf people in rehabilitation and elsewhere. We are aware of the needs for experts in manual communication, and since 1968, RSA, the Rehabilitation Services

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Administration, has supported the National Communicative Skills Program of the National Association of the Deaf, which provides such training to counselors and other professionals serving deaf people and their families, but there is so much more to be done.

My hope is that we can build a priority toward serving deaf people, who have been too long an overlooked minority, as we have become more sensitive to all minorities in our country. We will make a priority in SRS that will channel funds from other programs, where we have the resources Mr. Usdane referred to, in the new emerging social service agencies, in the Medicaid program, and other programs. We can even enlist the help of new, adapted, programs in education and go beyond in our advocacy in the Federal government, maybe, for instance, to the Federal Communications Commission, in its preparation of TV channels for cable television.

We are looking forward to further initiatives to come out of this 1972 National Conference on Deafness at Gallaudet. We hope to have a good sampling of consumers and service delivery people there to give visibility to our interests and needs in this field. Plans for that Conference are being made by Boyce and his colleagues. We will hope to produce for all HEW agencies with service delivery missions a broad-range message of needs and problems, including the development of methods to reduce or prevent poverty among deaf people. We will hold, as I guess many of you know, two pre-Conference planning sessions. The first will be this spring with voluntary and professional organizations – including this one – to hear about services for deaf persons, their plans to agument them and new proposals. The second pre-Conference session later in the year will turn that data into an agenda for the Conference itself.

We are excited about the possibilities under the new Vocational Rehabilitation Act, which is being amended. We have presented it to the House, and it has passed the House. We will present it to the Senate if enough of their members will stop running for President, and come back so we can have a quorum. Also, we will be, as the President stated in his State of the Union message, proposing an Allied Services Act to try and enable the various agencies and professions to come together to plan, not around their functions and bureaucracies alone, but to plan around problems and people and groups with special handicaps.

We feel that in this decade one of the high priorities will be the integration of services in more coherent ways. Then different agencies, working more closely together as they have in the rehabilitation movement all along may come together more comprehensively, to offer services, and in fact to be responsible as they should be held accountable, to give the services that deaf people are entitled to as a matter of rights in all these functional areas in our society that provide services.

In these things we look for your recommendations and your support. In the new legislation, we are pleased that you have agreed to play an active role in planning for the Gallaudet Conference. We need very much the

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participation of the voluntary organizations, and this one is a very important unit in giving visibility to this field. Your contribution to exchanging knowledge will better serve 20 million Americans with impaired hearing, not to speak of the 450,000 profoundly deaf persons on whom we are now focusing. You do this to focus on the problem rather than just focusing on techniques and standards and disciplines.

As a professional organization, you have been instrumental in developing better understanding of deaf people. I suppose the biggest barrier, after all, is the public's lack of understanding, or worse, its indifference. One of your members did what I think symbolizes the work of the organization, in getting this article in *The New York Times* only a couple of weeks ago, which I came upon. Dr. Larry Stewart, of your Board of Directors, writing on a truly silent minority, reviewed some of the many discriminatory practices aimed at deaf persons. It was said tonight that deaf persons can achieve and reach their potential on a par with other people, but we do have to address this biggest barrier, and we are beginning to reach the visibility and win attention to accomplish our mission.

Our mission, I think, SRS and including all of you, is best summed up by a person I will never forget when I was presenting this grant at the National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults. A client there who was at the Center made a short speech. He had been found misplaced in a mental hospital, a middle-aged man. At the Center he learned mobility, he learned to communicate, he learned to speak, and he learned a skill to the extent that he was able to go out from the Center into competitive employment in upstate New York. He was about to leave the Center, and on this occasion he expressed his thanks, faced the group of workers, agency administrators, peers and said, "With your help I have become almost a whole man." This is our common mission, well expressed, and though I am "manually retarded," let me try to sign this myself, 'I am proud to join you in this work.' Thank you.