Convention Summary: New Profiles of Opportunity

Robert R. Lauritsen

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Recommended Citation
New profiles of opportunity for deaf people have been inextricably woven into the entire fabric of the Second National Convention of the Professional Rehabilitation Workers with the Adult Deaf. We have been exposed directly and indirectly to New Programs and Services for Deaf People. President Nixon, during the recent campaign, and since assuming the Presidency, has said,

If I were to pick a time and a place in which to live, I would pick the United States of America, right today, 1969.

As we make ready to depart for the various sectors of these United States that we represent, it is a refreshing thought to know that deaf people, their families, their parents and their friends, can echo this sentiment with more confidence today than ever before. Let us hope that by the time we reassemble for our Third Convention at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in October, 1970, that this same sentiment can be expressed with even more fervor than today.

The number of professional workers with adult deaf people who have participated in this Second National Convention is a tribute to deaf people everywhere. Frequently, in rehabilitation, we speak of the attainment of dignity for the clients we serve. Through the dignity earned for our clients, we too, gain dignity in the work that we are undertaking, the habilitation and rehabilitation of deaf people. This dig-
nity for our clients and ourselves as professional workers, has been made possible in part through the further awareness by society of the deaf man; his contributions and his potentials.

The very presence of the new post-secondary academic, vocational and technical training opportunities for deaf people in integrated settings creates further public awareness. The spreading of Counseling and Community Service Centers for the Deaf throughout the United States creates further public awareness. The growth of the Registry of Interpreters and Mental Health Services creates further public awareness. The continuing programs of Gallaudet College, the expansion of residential school programs from more traditional programs towards rehabilitation oriented services such as found at the American School for the Deaf creates further public awareness. The recognition of Professional Rehabilitation Workers with the Adult Deaf as a true professional entity, creates further public awareness.

Certainly, one of the strongest vehicles for the full realization of the potentials and actual contributions of deaf people is through public awareness. Pascal, in the year 1623, said,

People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered than by those which have come into the minds of others.

Public awareness will permit this phenomenon to operate with increasing frequency in furthering knowledge that deaf people participate in society, as hearing people do, in the Worlds of Love, Play, Prayer and Work.

Earlier in this Convention, several lines from Robert Frost were read. Perhaps these lines bear repeating:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

We have had excellent representation at this Convention of Professional Rehabilitation Workers with the Adult Deaf. At the same time, there are numerous professionals who wanted
to attend this Convention, but were unable to do so for a variety of reasons. It is true that we have excellent new programs and services for deaf people; yet gaps in service still exist. We can argue that there are professional workers with adult deaf people who are not members of our organization. Basic to the philosophy of PRWAD is the continuing need "to promote the development of professional rehabilitation services for the adult deaf" (Article II, Section I, PRWAD By-Laws). We still have miles to go.

PRWAD was conceived by grass roots rehabilitation workers. PRWAD was formally established at a national workshop of grass roots rehabilitation workers. Even though we have grown to over 600 members in less than three years, We must renew our efforts in striving for the basic principles upon which we were founded. One of these principles requires our continuing efforts to increase the number of Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD's). It is primarily through RCD's that we will be fully able to attain the goals and objectives of PRWAD.

We have heard some excellent papers at this convention. Comments overheard at the coffee breaks, in the hallways and at the curb-stone conference between sessions reflect the fact that our various speakers have stimulated thought and have evoked action that will be implemented in effecting a variety of rehabilitative plans for our respective clients.

We accept as a basic requirement the need for post-secondary education. We can assume that every effort will be made to appropriate referrals to the various institutions that now offer higher education for deaf people. We are committed to use the various rehabilitation centers such as the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center. We are committed to an appropriate increase in the number of practicing RCD’s. Yet we are still faced with basic questions such as the question raised by several of our membership dealing with the lack of deaf people in the enterprise sponsored by the Community Business Service Association (CBSA) of the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company. This company has sought a marriage between industry and rehabilitation through a
cooperative effort in establishing qualified handicapped persons in self-owned small business enterprises. Of significance to PRWAD is the fact that of the 680 rehabilitation clients established by CBSA and VRA in business today, not one of these clients has a primary disability of deafness. Will this be the case by the time we reconvene in October, 1970? Emerson said, "This time, like all times, is a very good one if we but know what to do with it."

There were three major business sessions during this Convention. Particularly noteworthy have been the excellent reports by the various committees of PRWAD. Equally noteworthy has been the establishment of new committees by the membership. When the membership of an organization shares the commitment that you have displayed through your participation, and offers recommendations and motions creating new committees from the floor in such important areas as the multiply handicapped deaf and media services it gives further credence to our very existence.

The total field of rehabilitation services for deaf people has undergone significant change in the past several years through new profiles of opportunity. Change in patterns of service are most acceptable when change can be equated with progress. As we reflect upon the variety of new programs and services for deaf people we have been privileged to hear about these past few days, and when we consider PRWAD as the vehicle for the information exchanged, we can take justifiable pride in the knowledge that the additions, and changes in the total field of education and rehabilitation represent true progress.

PRWAD, in less than a third of a decade, has emerged as a strong representative voice in the field of rehabilitation. PRWAD, through its membership, has made significant contributions. PRWAD is not without its' challenges, for we have many. As this Second Convention draws to a close, we move forward into the future with confidence derived from past attainments, and with the realization that a camaraderie, an esprit de corps, binds the membership together in a common goal of providing further profiles of opportunity and professional rehabilitation services for deaf people.