

It is my pleasant duty here today to present prizes to the students the judges have selected as winner of the essay and poster contests. May I extend my heartiest congratulations and offer my strongest commendation to each of you for your achievement. It is a pleasure, too, to welcome the parents and teachers of these young people to these ceremonies. I am grateful to all of you for the assistance you have given this Committee in its efforts to remove certain prejudices from the minds of employers and convince them that men and women with physical handicaps have both the will and the capacity to be useful citizens.

Normal employment is the first goal a handicapped person must reach in the rather difficult journey he or she must make to become a completely productive, and therefore happy, citizen. Although we can be pleased with the outstanding progress we have made in this field, we should not close our eyes to the fact that many jobs which these people are capable of holding remain closed to them because of their disability. It is perhaps too much to expect an employer to hire anyone because of his disability. It is our task to persuade him that in each case he should consider the abilities and not the disabilities of a prospective employee.

Handicapped persons have demonstrated that, when properly placed and assigned, they can perform just as well, and in many cases better, than employees without disabilities. Studies have been made which show that impaired employees many times look better than their unimpaired co-workers, in such things as absenteeism and in minor and disabling injuries, for example.

Psychologists use the term "compensation" to describe the search human beings make for the unattainable. People with physical handicaps "compensate" for their deficiencies by working twice as hard to perform their tasks well. The pages of history are filled with examples of persons attaining great heights of success while compensating for their handicaps. We recall a Franklin D. Roosevelt, afflicted with infantile paralysis, guiding our nation through a great crisis; an epileptic Julius Caesar carving out a great empire; a deaf Beethoven composing immortal musical masterpieces; a blind John Milton dictating poems of lasting beauty.

We Americans have been justly acclaimed for our humanitarian spirit, and our first interest in the employment of the handicapped is an interest in the human individual. But beyond this feeling, a very hard and practical case can be made for the employment of these persons. Manpower has become a precious commodity in this country,